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Intimate Past & Present Light:

Using Photography to Investigate Self-Defining Memories

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Declaration of Originality

I, **Odette Sherie England** …… hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author, unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led research project investigates the relationship between autobiographical memory and photography.

My research question comprises two parts. Firstly, how can I mediate the virtual space between myself, as both the maker and as the subject of my practice, to the viewer? Rather than communicating autobiographical specificity, how to emphasise the malleability of personal memories, using the photographic object as metaphor, so that a viewer may experience some shared nostalgia for the 'lost' past. Secondly, to what extent can the separation of self occur, from being 'fixed' in a snapshot and 'semi-fixed' in memory to being 'present' in the studio?

I initiated this project from my preoccupation with self-defining memories of intimate relationships. I began with my 'self'. These memories provided a means of confronting my research objective: using photography to manipulate them.

This research reflects the need to address through photography the plasticity and transferability of memory's hold on the present. To do this, I reworked personal snapshots and memories through material and sensory encounter. To help make way for a viewer's bond to form with my work, I needed to dissolve and rework my bond with personal snapshots and memories. This was key to bridging the intangible space of my past. I produced several series of photographs, contextualised by Endel Tulving's hypothesis of chronesthesia (mental time travel) and Henri Bergson's theory of recollection recovery.

Through conception and execution of reworked photographs, I occupied a distinctive space as a maker/subject. This space, which I have termed prepositional space, allowed me to 'unfix' self from snapshots and memories to be present in the studio. This makes way for a viewer's bond to form. I argue that prepositional space is a significant new methodology for artists and viewers to assess their encounter with such photographs.

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INTRODUCTION

This practice-based research project interrogates the relationship between autobiographical memory and photography. I position it within a segment of cognitive psychology called the reminiscence bump. This is the phenomenon for increased recollection of memories from between the ages of 10 and 30 than from any other stage of one's life.[1] Research about the reminiscence bump is evolving. Examination of it alongside photographic practice is novel.[2] It breaks new ground in representing autobiographical memory and recollection.

My research question comprises two parts. The first is how to mediate the space between myself, as both the maker and as the subject of my practice, and the viewer. The viewer knows little or nothing about my past or my practice. They are an outsider who I must include in my discussion so that they may experience shared nostalgia for the 'lost' past. The second part is to what extent separation of self can occur from being 'fixed' in a snapshot and 'semi-fixed' in memory to being 'present' in the studio. To help make way for a viewer's bond to form with my work, I need to dissolve and rework my bond with personal snapshots and memories.

One hypothesis for the reminiscence bump is that there are more identity-forming first experiences and emotions during adolescence and early adulthood.[3] Their uniqueness and how we save and protect them ensures they last. For example, we keep first experiences of intimate relationships because they mark a change in how we grow as individuals.

How one can manipulate these types of memories, known as self-defining memories, is central to my project. Through photography I scrutinise the plasticity and transferability of their hold.

[1] Ashok Jansari and Alan J. Parkin, "Things That Go Bump in Your Life: Explaining the Reminiscence Bump in Autobiographical Memory," *Psychology and Aging* 11, no. 1 (1996): 85.
[2] See, for example, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, "Anne Brodie: Dead Mother, 20 June – 6 July 2014," accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.daniellearnaud.com/exhibitions/exhibition-dead-mother.html.
[3] Clare J. Rathbone, Chris J. A. Moulin, and Martin A. Conway, "Self-Centered Memories: The Reminiscence Bump and The Self," *Memory & Cognition* 36, no. 8 (2008): 1403.

Self-defining memories help us to describe and explain how we develop into who we are. They have five key features: "affective intensity; vividness, repetitiveness, linkage to other memories [and a] focus on enduring concerns or unresolved conflicts".[4]

The way we recall self-defining memories also impacts who we think we are. It is because of symbolism that the vivid images we construct when we imagine the future or recall the past are not reproductions of 'real life'. Rather, the images created by self-defining memories are so clear and intense they almost "re-create the world."[5]

According to the Self-Memory System there are two sometimes opposing basic functions of human memory. These are adaptive correspondence and coherence of the self. Correspondence refers to the need to encode and retrieve events so that memories correspond to reality. Coherence refers to our need to maintain in the present a clear, secure, and constant connection to who we were in the past and to who we want to be in the future.

If we view memories of intimate relationships from the reminiscence bump period as representations that *correspond* to reality, accuracy becomes crucial. In contrast, in deeming these memories to serve the *coherence* function, issues of accuracy are less important. Evidence suggests we form our identity in the reminiscence bump period.[6] Thus, memories from within it may more often serve the coherence function.

This research project starts with three common assumptions about autobiographical memories.[7] First, we can manipulate them. Second, we rearrange or rebuild memories to serve our own needs and assess our 'selves'. Third, we engage memory to suit thoughts or feelings. The research focus, then, is using photography to make new work that represents actual and fictional experience, which becomes a tool for recollection, imagination, or suggestion for the viewer.

***

In chapter one I describe development of the methodology. Informing this is a review of work made pre-candidature, which explored the instability of self-identity. This leads to the construction of a list of perspectives informing creative practice.

[4] Jefferson A. Singer and Peter Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1993), 12.
[5] Jefferson Singer, *Memories That Matter: How to Use Self-Defining Memories to Understand and Change Your Life* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2005), 37.
[6] Ibid., 279.
[7] Angelina R. Sutin and Richard W. Robins, "When the "I" Looks at the "Me": Autobiographical Memory, Visual Perspective, and the Self," *Consciousness and Cognition* 17, no. 4 (2008): 1390-1391.

From the outset, I conceive of *photographs* and *photographing* as comparable to memory. As Geoffrey Batchen explains: "Memory…is selective, fuzzy in outline, intensively subjective, often incoherent, and invariably changes over time – a conveniently malleable form of fiction."[8]

Chapter one also presents three exploratory series of images using snapshots and memories of intimate relationships as material. Each series shows how the process of reworking images can represent the subjective intangible space of autobiographical memory. Through this work, I address key research questions about the importance of materiality in meaning construction, and how different types of encounter influence a viewer's understanding of memory through a photograph.

I reveal the advantages and challenges of reworking in relation to how I engage with, and respond to, the materials I use. This includes using shapes and frames to influence perception. I establish how loss becomes a stimulus for unfixing, reworking, and transforming my selves.

Mobilising the use of dualities, such absence/presence and original/copy, helps to mediate the space between selves and viewer. This leads to a discussion about the unique space I occupy as a maker and as a subject. And, how this space is understood in relation to autobiographical memory and personal photographs.

Chapter two establishes a comprehensive background for this research. It focuses on Endel Tulving's hypothesis of chronesthesia (mental time travel) and Henri Bergson's theory of recollection recovery. Through their theories, I reflect on the roles of self as maker and self as subject and how some of the intricacies of chronesthesia and recollection recovery, as evolving mental states, guide creative outputs and outcomes in the studio.

I examine the ways in which literary theorist Roland Barthes, photographer Guy Archard and filmmaker Bill Morrison represent memory in their work. In particular, Barthes' recollections of the Winter Garden Photograph as a type of 'flat death' in his book *Camera Lucida*; Archard's strategies for creating ambiguity and sparking viewer imagination through Polaroid photographs presented in his monograph *Almost*; and Morrison's approach to collapsing and dissolving images of the past-present and re-presenting them as emotional cues in his non-narrative film *Decasia*.

[8] Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 16.

Surveying a broader field of references than visual arts practice alone allows placement of my story into a wider historical and cultural framework. Through this investigation, I identify new methods for manipulating memories through reworking images. I establish that for photographs to be meaningful for a viewer, an 'opening' is necessary. This is key to my research. For when we look at any photograph and mentally time travel or recall a memory, our link to the 'real thing' depicted severs. It is then replaced by its connection with information and images stored mentally.

This leads to in-depth discussion of the space my 'selves' occupy proposed in chapter one. I come to consider snapshots and the site of my artist studio as distinct physical and mental spaces. New terminology – prepositional space – is offered for the space I create and inhabit when using my snapshots as tools for mental time travel and recollection recovery, and vice versa.

In chapter three I describe and reflect on the images constructed using a range of hybrid and alternative photographic methods. I apply key insights derived from chapter two. For example, using recurrent subject matter in my work and displacement as a specific type of reworking. Practice is further informed through analysis of photographs by Binh Danh, Alice Cazenave, Hippolyte Bayard, and Smith Eliot.

Throughout the chapter I explain and assess how the work and my selves evolved. I discuss how within the different frames I occupy as a maker/subject, the space among autobiographical memory, imagination, creativity, and reality converges. Practice reveals how physical and mental interaction with the work activates the mind's eye more effectively than sight alone.

The final chapter introduces and reviews two final bodies of work. These developed through consideration of the irreplaceable and autonomous in photography, and how they connect with autobiographical memory. I position them in context of contemporary photographic works by Letha Wilson and Phil Chang.

In the conclusion, I summarise how my practice-led project enabled me to locate and inhabit prepositional space. This space facilitated the production of new work. The research creates new knowledge about the malleability of snapshots and the role of material and sensory encounter in creating space for new stories to materialise. It also generates a better understanding of the maker/subject/viewer relationship.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY and FOUNDATION WORK

Chapter Introduction

This chapter investigates my studio practice. I reassess earlier works, and explore how practice-based research is akin to practices of recollection and photography. These actions point to a methodology based on *reworking images* to manipulate self-defining memories of intimate relationships from within the reminiscence bump. I describe and analyse initial experiments through which I generate further questions and refine the methodology.

Though photography is the main frame for this research my examination crosses into memory work and cognitive psychology. Each involves discovering and exposing stories; I use their interpretative qualities for reworking variants of self and influencing creative practice. As the study *Facing the Public: Using Photography for Self-Study and Social Action* posits,

> Looking, gazing, seeing, noticing: Gathering evidence and evaluating. These are at the heart of any self-study, especially those using photography-based methods…the personal experience of looking, when shared…can evolve to critical reflection.[9]

"Gathering evidence" through "noticing" allows me to consider different ways of using photography to articulate the intangible and subjective nature of autobiographical memory. It also facilitates the deconstruction and reconstruction of self, as maker and subject, helping me to identify instinctive processes influencing my work.

Exploring Past Selves

> In the face of seemingly limitless possibilities, practice cannot know or preconceive its outcome. Rather, the new emerges through process as a shudder of an idea, which is then realised in and through language.[10]

If artistic realisation occurs through language as Barbara Bolt conceives in this quote, this validates my decision to begin this project in the comfortable space of list making. This step is common for focusing the mind or making meaning.

Constructing a list of perspectives allows me to rework self, to invoke (and thus experience) new knowledge and ideas for photographically investigating the intangibility of my past, in the present. I can identify and interpret the typologies of practice to achieve methodological self-consciousness.

[9] Claudia Mitchell, Sandra Weber, and Kathleen Pithouse, "Facing the Public: Using Photography for Self-Study and Social Action," in *Research Methods for the Self-Study of Practice*, ed. Deborah Tidwell, Melissa Heston, and Linda Fitzgerald (New York, NY: Springer, 2009), 127.
[10] Barbara Bolt, "The Exegesis and The Shock of the New," *TEXT Special Issue*, no. 3 (2004): unpaginated.

In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* Rebecca Solnit writes,

> Every love has its landscape… The places inside matter as much as the ones outside… for inside and outside are more intertwined than the usual distinctions allow. Is it that there is a place where all emotion lies together…a faraway deep inside.[11]

To manipulate self-defining memories through photography, I need to submerge into the "deep inside" of previous work, or as American sociologist Arthur P. Bochner distinguishes, "gathering knowledge *from* the past and not necessarily knowledge *about* the past."[12]

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I am grounded in the physical space of my studio but usually go 'out' of it 'into' the wide open of my mind to begin a project. I recall mental images and past events and bring them 'back' to work from.

In re-examining previous work, I noticed I often removed self as subject matter, or made 'self' difficult to access. For example, in *Crash Markers* I created multilayered photographs based on memories and snapshots of a serious car accident I had. But the images are devoid of figures, a specific time or location, or a single dominant subject [figure 1, left]. In *Photos of Me Without Me* I cut myself out of family snapshots and then realigned the remaining slivers [figure 2, right].

Fig. 1. *Crashes #5* from the series *Crash Markers* (2005-2008)
Fig. 2. *Without Me #8* (right) from the series *Photos of Me Without Me* (2011)

[11] Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2006): 118-119.
[12] Arthur P. Bochner, "Notes Toward an Ethics of Memory in Autoethnographic Inquiry," in *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 203.

These examples highlight a tendency to obstruct photographic self-representation. This allows a viewer to insert themselves into my personal world and summon their own memories. Since we cannot perceive the world in an objective manner, we sift reality through meshes of preference and bias. In my work, I often remove self so that a viewer can 'sift' more freely, altering and interpreting the content, making it more relevant and relatable. This act of disappearing signalled one approach to addressing my research questions.

Many have critiqued the photograph as a trace, a document, an artwork, and a record that can link us to the past.[13] The photographs in my series *Self Diagnosis* [figure 3, left][14] and in *Develop Before* [figure 4, right][15] examine my lack of physical proximity to the past. I achieved this by highlighting fading and deterioration. These qualities are inherent in photographic objects as repositories of memory. I re-exposed my past through elimination and abstraction, which determines how a viewer reads my past, in the present. This is a second identifier for this project.

Fig. 3. *IX* from the series *Self Diagnosis* (2011)
Fig. 4. *Develop Before 10/1990* (right) from the series *Develop Before* (2014-2015)

Phenomenological experience can describe self-defining memories. For example, some memories are clear and intense, others are obscure. Some illicit stronger emotions than others. The way we recall memories, and the characteristics of those memories, influence our judgements, perceptions, and emotions. My series *Attentional Landscapes* is a relevant example of the phenomenology of memory [figure 5]. In it, I manipulated the meaning and function of family photographs. This atomization of snapshots also explores the limits of perception. It challenges the amount of information a viewer needs to derive understanding.

[13] For example, Kaja Silverman, introduction to *The Miracle of Analogy or The History of Photography, Part I* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015): 1-12.
[14] A part photographic, part psychological study of how I see myself versus how others see me in the family album, using the backs of original Rorschach inkblot test cards to interfere with meaning and thus infer meaning.
[15] Made by photographing disassembled vintage snapshot film boxes.

Fig. 5. *#20* from the series *Attentional Landscapes* (2007-2008)

Reviewing these previous works highlights use of obfuscation and absence to let a viewer 'in'. I saw that using loss as a tool could help to rework and transform a self for this research project, and convey meaning to a viewer. Memories of my intimate relationship history are so opaque to others that some kind of transformation must occur if a viewer is to relate to the images.

Thus, I propose material and sensory encounter is key to bridging the intangible space of my past. This should help to press a viewer into memories and photographs that belong to me. This 'encounter' may occur in different ways. For example, through reworking the collection of personal snapshots I often use as material interface in my studio. These snapshots, then, become the scaffold for art.

'Encounter' extends the notion of material thinking proposed by Paul Carter, which happens during the process of making art.[16] For Carter, the varied and complex decisions an artist makes in creating work are material. In other words, they have substance and influence. Material thinking involves a process of reflection, interpretation, and imagination. The ideas, processes, images, and materials artists use for research have their own "creative intelligence".[17] They communicate with the artist using language that they 'hold'.

[16] Paul Carter, preface to *Material Thinking* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2004): xi.
[17] Ibid., xiii.

Barbara Bolt extends Carter's theory by suggesting that it is when an artist *responds* to this language that material thinking occurs in a magical way.[18] 'Encounter' becomes an intimate scholarship of reworking. It is when self-as-artist, self-as-subject, and the materials one chooses to work with intertwine and inform each other. We exchange ideas and information flows between us. Each influence what the other 'thinks' and their perceptions of what the other 'says' in making art.

From Carter and Bolt's theories, questions arose. What is the importance of materiality in meaning construction for the viewer? How do sensory or spatial encounters influence a viewer's understanding of memory through a photograph? Their recollection of their own memories? What can a reworked photograph 'hold' in relation to personal memory? How could a viewer's experience of my work involve active participation through material and sensory encounter? These are questions I sought to answer through practice-based experimentation.

Experimentation I: *On Objects of Intimacy*

Using insights gathered from reviewing previous work, I began studying snapshots I collected over the years. Neglected or disowned, they are already marked by loss.

I focussed on snapshots that show romantic relationships. Some are more relatable than others. I can insert myself into a virtual space the snapshot affords and be 'there'. In the many images I encountered, the ones that 'stick' are those that touch me. This is why it felt necessary to experiment with others' snapshots. I wanted to see if I could create personal resonance by reworking them.

Sir John Herschel coined the term 'snapshot' in 1860.[19] It described an instant shot that captured a subject or event without regard for composition, light, or other similar factors. It has since been further defined and redefined but maintains a connection to Herschel's description.

A snapshot attempts to freeze and fix how we experience everyday life and to store individual and collective memories. But snapshots are ambiguous surfaces. They capture the *state* of the surface at the time of making. Thus, they have an indistinct relationship to reality. They are full of ambivalent meanings.

[18] Barbara Bolt, "Materializing Pedagogies," *Working Papers in Art and Design 4* (2006), accessed January 11, 2016, https://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12381/WPIAAD_vol4_bolt.pdf
[19] Adriano D'Aloia and Francesco Parisi, ed., "Snapshot Culture: The Photographic Experience in the Post-Medium Age," *Comunicazioni Sociali*, Journal of Media, Performing Arts and Cultural Studies, no. 1 (2016): 11.

Snapshots also are unique as visual objects in that we 'do things' with them. We frame them for display on our desks and tuck them into our wallets. We stick them to our refrigerators and send them to relatives abroad. In turn, they 'do things' to us. Our most treasured snapshots offer us a private virtual space between past and present. In this space, we can replace and reconstruct a self.

A critical factor in this process is context. Snapshots are only significant and meaningful to those who 'know' what they are 'about'. For the viewer, they offer something else. With these snapshots, the viewer must layer onto them interpretive methods as well as cognitive and social processes.

I edited a selection where a subtext of intimacy was present, such as physical contact [figure 6], and began photographing the prints. As I did, I appreciated their material differences. Some bent with ease, some felt thicker, coarser. Some bore signs of extensive handling. They also were stackable, and so I made and photographed several card houses. By accident I made a double exposure, whereby one of the 'couples in love' snapshots overlaid with a card house on the same piece of film. This paved the way for a series *On Objects of Intimacy*.

Fig. 6. Undated snapshot, author's private collection

Like many experiments that begin by accident, I repeated the process until it became a formal device. I observed and listened to what my materials and processes were 'saying'. The failure rate was high: for every 20 or so double-exposures made, only one worked. It worked when the layers were fluid and effortless, where I could see the original snapshot as part of a new visual architecture. This was key for allowing a response based on formal and conceptual assimilation.

For example, in *Bond* a couple is dancing [figure 7]. Through multiple exposure and in-camera cropping of the original snapshot, I highlight physical and emotional elements of the scene. A viewer reads the couple's gestures and closeness rather than *who* they are or *where* they are. The viewer is no longer pinned down by photographic specificity.

Cropping out non-crucial elements such as the floor, surrounding people, and backgrounds removes distraction. Cropping out faces takes it a step further. It highlights cues about the value of the artefact and its handling. The image becomes a visual inference or evocation onto which a viewer can layer their own feelings about similar experiences. Obfuscation changes its spatial and sensory presentation.

Fig. 7. *Bond* from the series *On Objects of Intimacy* (2015)

The overlaying 'folds' of the snapshots used to make the card house entwine with couple. This achieves several important points. It creates a combination of image elements that would not occur in the 'real' world; rather, in a remembered or imagined world. It draws the viewer's attention to the materiality of the image. It also denotes the role of snapshots as multilayered experiences: they can inform, disguise, prompt, confuse, or comfort.

I printed *Bond* on white cotton rag but the paper was too stark and the large print size (17x22') overtook fine details in the work. It changed the emotional tone of the image, too. The shades of brown and cream were no longer warm and comforting. I changed the paper stock and reduced the size. The smaller size produces a powerful suspense. It beckons the viewer forward. The viewer encounters subject matter that looks and feels sensual. The card house fractures light and gives shape to the shadows, creating erotic corners and folds.

Erotic corners and folds are evident in *Stroke* [figure 8]. Fading and abstraction as approaches to reworking encourage the viewer to look at what *is* depicted. For example, hands suggest contact, fondness, or consolation. The overlaid snapshots meanwhile create a visual caressing of the subject matter. It is this that may incite the recall of how you have touched a loved one.

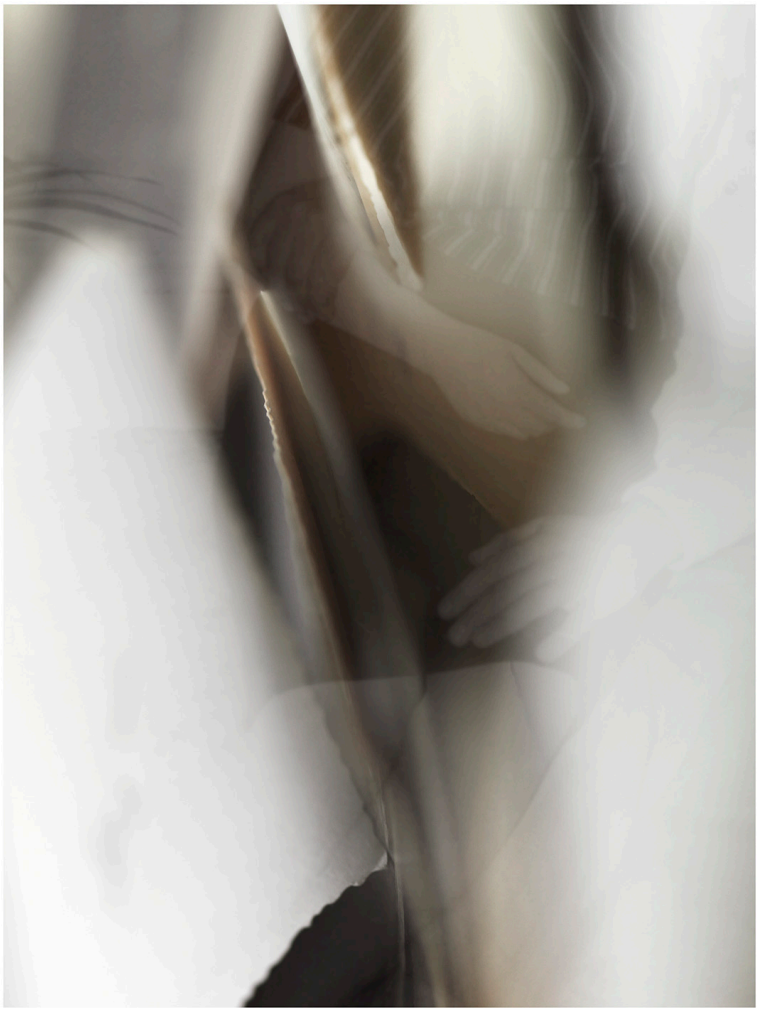

Fig. 8. *Stroke* from the series *On Objects of Intimacy* (2015)

From here I began using editing to communicate visual and conceptual facets of the work. For example, choosing images where light and shadow areas of the card houses help to guide a viewer's eye. In *Lead* [figure 9] a curved peal of light on the left draws the eye down from the man's cheek to the woman's arm and then across to their hands clasped together. In *Draw* [figure 10] two dark shadows arch toward the hips of a couple sitting close together, and then to their hands. 'Guiding' a viewer through the material characteristics of snapshots thus activates their reading.

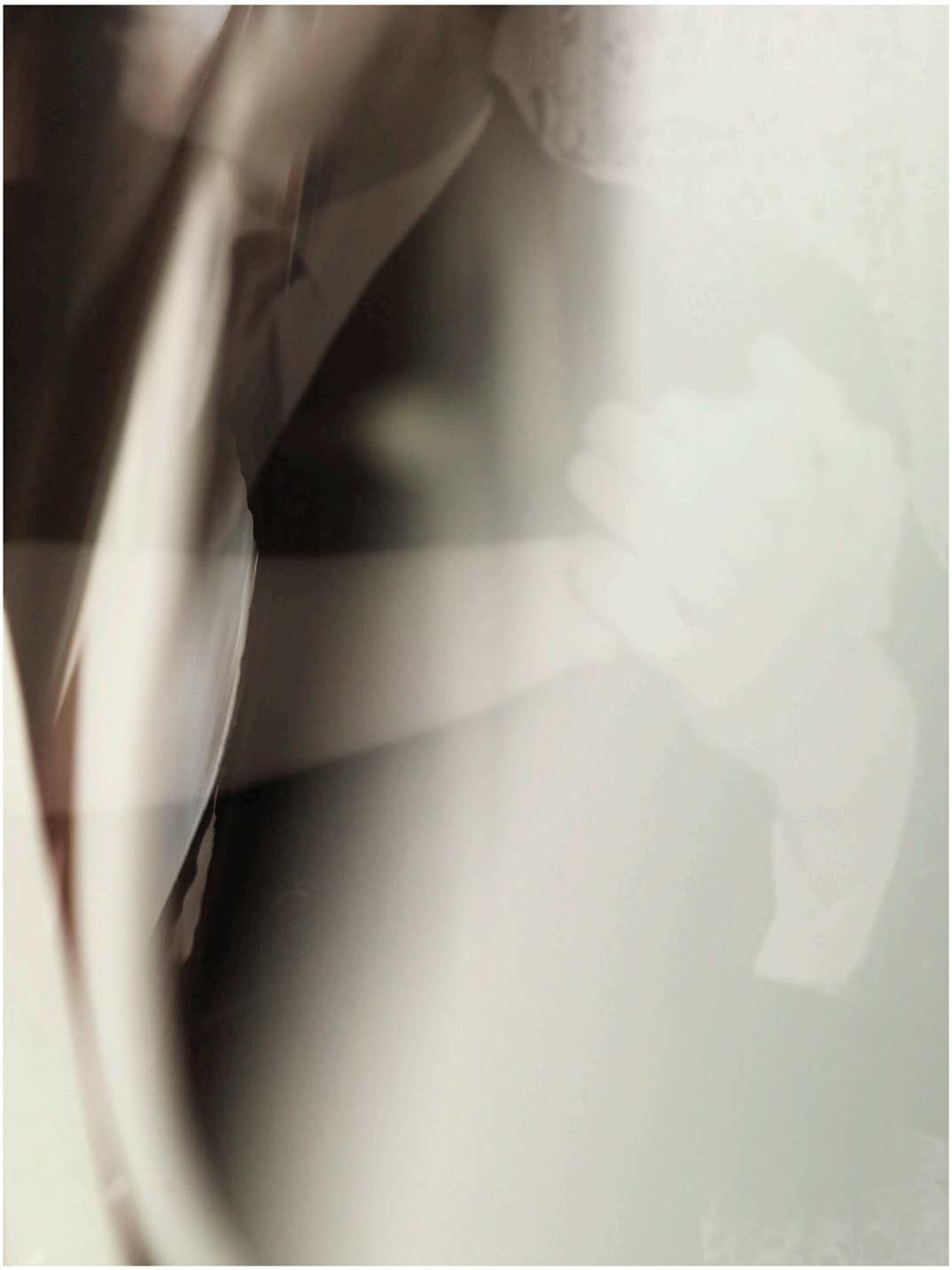

Fig. 9. *Lead* from the series *On Objects of Intimacy* (2015)

Fig. 10. *Draw* from the series *On Objects of Intimacy* (2015)

Titling the images *Bond, Stroke, Lead,* and *Draw* was important for suggesting movement involving one's hands or an object across a surface. These words imply a series of actions or repeated action, in which something moves out of its position and back into it. This mirrors the process of recalling memories. We transition ourselves 'out' of reality and then 'back into' it.

These images show how material and sensory encounter mediates our visual experience and understanding of others' snapshots. Reworking snapshots creates new impulses, expectations, reveries, and interactions. It does this for self-as-artist and the viewer through content. It changes our mode of attention and attachment. It influences the snapshot as a 'something' to make it *feel* like something.

I felt connected to the images in a way I couldn't when they were snapshots alone. This feeling intensifies through the word 'on' in the series title. When you make a double exposure, you place one image *on* another. 'On' is about encounter and contact. 'On' is above, close to, near, with, supported, and toward. 'On' also designates a field of inquiry. These images began to clarify how photography could manipulate someone else's intimate past and make it relatable and relevant to me.

Experimentation II: *Temporarily Yours*

Layering snapshots and selecting and cropping content was effective. I was mediating photographic space to allow a viewer 'in'. So, I continued making multiple exposures. I rephotographed others' snapshots, but this time layered on top images of pages torn from albums collected from thrift stores. These pages no longer had images stuck on them. Only traces of white outlines were visible. I also experimented with focus and depth of field.

Through this variant of reworking I explored the presence and absence of subject matter. I used framing to create tipping points of feeling: hard lines versus soft grounds, clarity versus obscurity.

For example, *Origin* presents two silhouetted figures [figure 11]. Formal contrasts suggest a movement of time or transition between the figures. The silhouettes allow a viewer to extract some information about gender and age, but they reinforce anonymity. This namelessness, rather than protecting identity, also facilitates viewer association. It prompts questioning that stimulates the imagination. Could the silhouetted figures be father and son, or grandfather and grandson? Or, is the image a representation of a man mentally revisiting his past: the teenager he once was versus the middle-aged man he is now?

Fig. 11. *Origin* work-in-progress (2015)

I printed a selection of test images as landscapes, and then considered how reworking the frame of view could offer a different form of encounter for a viewer. I pondered how shape could influence mood. I thought about the 'shape' of self-defining memories. Rarely do I associate the process of recall, or memories, with strength or stability. Rather, they are fluid.

A key moment in the history of amateur photography also influenced decision-making. The earliest Kodak photographic prints were circular, as these examples viewed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York [figure 12]. These prints, taken with a Kodak No. 1 camera, are homemade cyanotypes. They depict ordinary scenes and objects: houses, streets, churches, trees, pets, and shops. Though the intent of the round print was to resolve a technical issue[20] it 'targets' the eye towards the centre of each image. The circular shape also infers calm and harmony. This may be because all points on a circle are equidistant from its centre.

[20] At the start of the snapshot era the meniscus lenses used were only sharp in the central part of the projection. So, the camera produced images with soft out-of-focus corners. To solve this problem, George Eastman's original version of the Kodak No. 1 incorporated a mask that produced negatives 65mm round. "Kodak Gallery," The National Media Museum, accessed April 22, 2016, http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/planavisit/exploreourgalleries/kodak

Fig. 12. Unknown artist (American), cyanotypes, 1890-92.

These reflections and knowledge triggered changing the format of my reworked images. As circles, the images felt transferrable in a way the rectangle didn't allow. There were new details I noticed and things no longer visible. The images became trajectories and metamorphoses of memory and perception.

Pane demonstrates the relationship between how recollection changes a memory and how it is perceived [figure 13]. Two main image elements emphasise this. First, the sparseness of detail. An old wooden powerline on the far left, a second near-identical one on the far right, and a small tree lower right are the clearest 'facts' to grasp. In contrast, at the top of frame, two soft white cloud-like forms emit strands of light mimicking the look of a rainstorm on a distant horizon. The composition means the centre of the image becomes an open space for viewer imagination to evolve. It invites a viewer to inhabit it mentally to 'complete' the snapshot.

The image's significance now lies in the intensity it builds through absence, and in what thoughts or feelings it makes possible. Removal, fading, and abstraction deactivate my 'self' as maker from the image. The image now maps new connections and routes for a viewer. It became a new complex object of potential connections. A new point of contact for gazing, imagining, sensing, and affirming came into view through reworking.

The second image element is use of the circular frame. This encourages a different type of visual navigation of the content. Obscuring detail and reconstructing the frame together signposts what remains in the image but also what is missing.

Fig. 13. *Pane* work-in-progress (2015)

Through this evaluation, I saw I reworked these snapshots, as material objects of the past, into studies of loss in the present. They represent a loss of what I *know* to be in the original snapshots, but now can only see in my mind's eye. They also represent a loss of what a viewer could have seen, but now must use their mind's eye to *see* and then *feel* something new.

Silhouettes, windows, and powerlines are foci for several reasons. Though subject matter attached to certain self-defining memories of mine, they are subjects that can frame our view of the world. We often base our perceptions of a person or a place because of them. Sometimes this is unconscious behaviour. They also are support structures that transfer and distribute information.

But it is the creation of atmosphere and obscurity in and around these ordinary motifs that provides a key entry point. Layering, soft focus, the shape of the circle, and colour create a pictorial language that adds a sense of sentimentality to the work. Through these strategies, the past remains an abstract concept.

In Art 21's *Change*, Catherine Opie describes her editing process: "…I want to make sure that I can walk into the studio three days in a row and have it [the work] hold me…that's where you have to let your nostalgia go, if you can."[21] This interested me because it implies a power images hold over their maker. In living with the circular images, though there was a 'holding', monotony prevailed. Each image comprised one circle, the same size and same position on the page.

As the camera alone could not give the effect I wanted, I took the same license with the page as a painter or collagist. I combined two or more circles, using aesthetics and formal intuition to guide my actions. I overlapped some and positioned them in different areas of the paper. It worked in that it returned the images to their album roots, yet still removed from their functional context.

I also considered the kinds of recurrent image symbols that appear throughout snapshot collections. In *Kodak and the Rise of Amateur Photography*, Mia Fineman discusses the homogeneity of what we photograph:

> The great majority of early snapshots were made for personal reasons: to commemorate important events (weddings, graduations, parades); to document travels and seaside holidays; to record parties, picnics, or simple family get-togethers; to capture the appearance of children, pets, cars, and houses.[22]

I applied this knowledge to the ongoing selection of subject matter for my work. I continued choosing everyday subjects that also live within self-defining memories of intimate relationships. Now, I also looked for and found recurrent image trends. Nature such as birds, trees, fields, beaches, and flowers were prevalent.

These subjects share other commonalities. They are generally considered beautiful or picturesque, the kinds of subjects that attract the amateur photographer. When I look at them, my mind experiences calm and quiet. The outer world in which I live is irrelevant for a moment, in part because of the memories these subjects trigger.

[21] "Catherine Opie in 'Change'", *Art in the Twenty-First Century*, season 6 (Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 2012), DVD.
[22] Mia Fineman, "Kodak and the Rise of Amateur Photography," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), accessed April 17, 2017, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kodk/hd_kodk.htm (October 2004).

But conscientious selection of subject matter had to connect with conceptual reasons for using the circle, and formal considerations of composition. Through practice I learned that the shape, size, and quantity of circles manipulated the saliency of subject matter as well as the image as a whole. I created different spatial arrangements, which in turn need different spatial engagement. The off-kilter positioning accentuates presence and absence. The images and their surrounding white space create flux. The atypical arrangements ask a viewer to shift, refocus, and deploy their self to orient and make meaning. Rather than snapshots that encase the space of the past, as reworked images, they provide their own space.

In *Lift*, the open composition and the careful balance of its component parts collaborate within the square frame [figure 14]. This collaboration means the viewer focusses their perceptual and cognitive resources on the available recognisable information while also seeking other relationships or patterns to draw meaning.

At first glance each circle appears uninhabited, but they call for an attentive eye. The content of the top circle is the most ambiguous, where smoke or clouds restrict the view of a line of trees in the distance. In this same circle, an out-of-focus face and shoulder are perceptible.

In the centre circle, a dead tree sits atop a hill, framed by white rectangles. These create a pathway through the image and toward the final circle. In it, two birds in flight, of what type and where we cannot tell. The eye is then guided back out to the three circles as a group, which look like chemical compounds, droplets of water, or lights in the distance.

Fig. 14. *Lift* from the series *Temporarily Yours* (2015)

Philosopher Arnold Berleant suggests direct parallels between love and beauty.[23] He positions the two as, "relational ideas and not formal features of objects…they denote the *character* of a situation" [my emphasis].[24] In other words, in love and in beauty, a personal encounter ensues from our intimate involvement with something or someone. In context of my reworked circular photographs, their character is to make a viewer look longer and to draw meaning through layering their imagination and experience. That meaning unfolds slowly, from circle to circle.

[23] Arnold Berleant, "Ideas for a Social Aesthetic," in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), x.
[24] Ibid., 32.

In *Soar,* positioning and layering transform the subject matter, details of which the viewer can just make out [figure 15]. From the unfocussed fog of layers of snapshots in the top circle to the gulls flying in the lower circle, *looking* becomes *noticing*. The hope is that in *waiting* something new will appear. Barren backgrounds and edges of frames underline the simplicity of the scenery. The emergence of occasional clarity, in this case birds, serves for recognition.

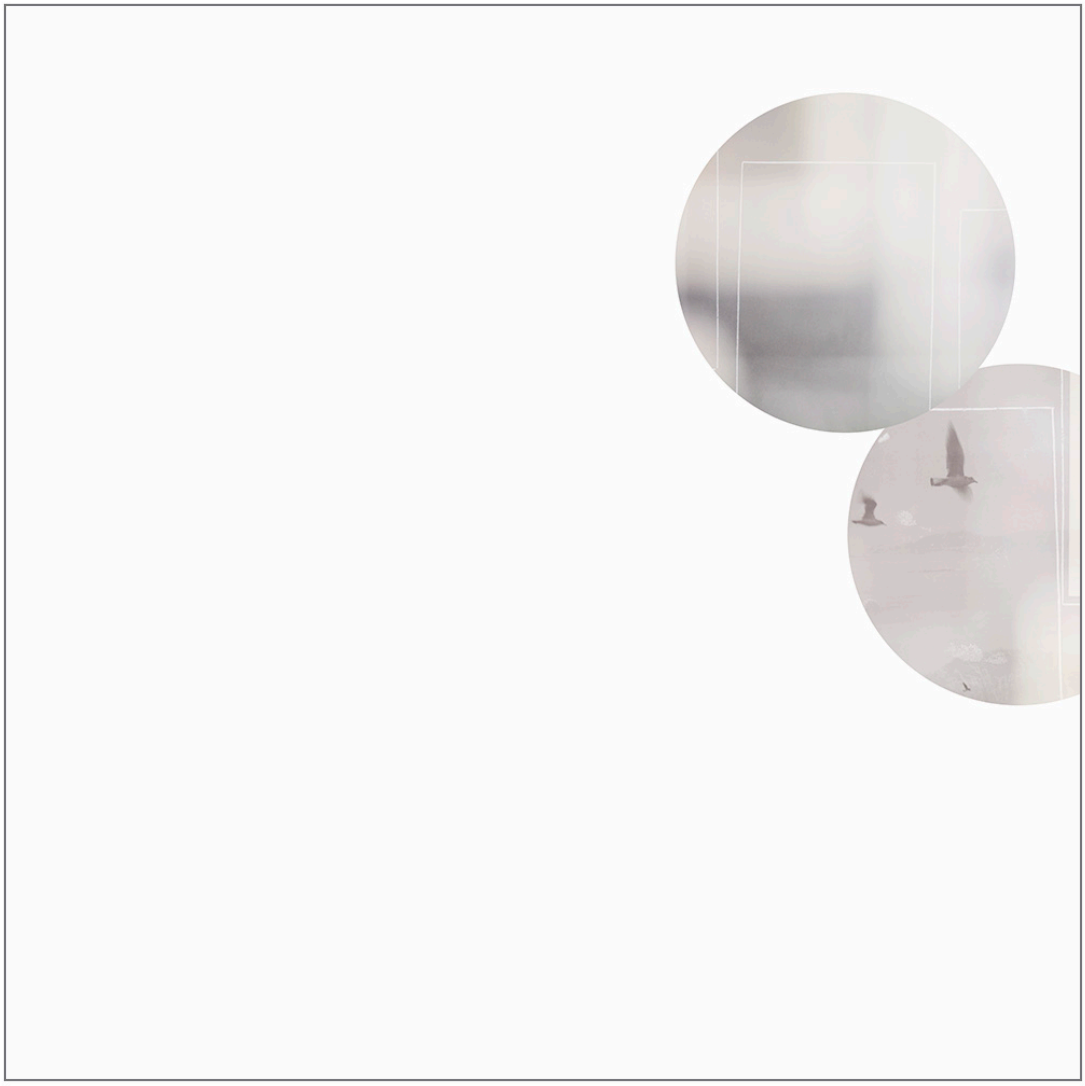

Fig. 15. *Soar* from the series *Temporarily Yours* (2015)

Selective focus and zooming in on what is distant, and vice versa, transforms some subject matter into blemishes and smears. This is clear in the completed version of *Pane* [figure 16]. It also provides the image with a painterly aesthetic. Paired with the almost monotone palette of each work in the series, which brings the characteristics of black and white rather than colour photography to mind, this quality may add to the works' evocation of memory.

Fig. 16. *Pane* from the series *Temporarily Yours* (2015)

The series title *Temporarily Yours* references the ephemerality of autobiographical memory, snapshots, and intimate relationships. In love, we give ourselves to another, sometimes for 'life'. In retrieving memory, we detach ourselves from the present, though our present is 'now' and 'now' is always moving. These images are in continual liaison with the past-present.

The fluctuating nature of memory is the subtext of these images and an area ripe for further investigation. I identified that through simple dualities – me/you, together/apart, clear/vague – there is potential to distinguish a virtual space between autobiographical memory and photographs. Through these dualities, I can build access to meaning for a viewer by doing as Geoffrey Batchen suggests: "guiding our mind's eye back and forth, into and out of the photograph."[25] Through practice I identified this type of virtual looking and noticing can influence a viewer's encounter of my work. It makes the potential for a viewer to reconstruct the pieces of my past I leave in my reworked photographs.

Experimentation III: *Excavations*

Annette Kuhn writes,

> Memory work has a great deal in common with forms of inquiry which – like detective work and archaeology – involve working backwards – searching for clues, deciphering signs and traces, making deductions, patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence.[26]

Photography and archaeology involve the exposure, processing, and recording of the past/present. To continue my inquiry, "working backwards" to rework "fragments of evidence" I needed to insert my own past more fully into the work. What the previous experiments lack is the reworking of *my* snapshots. This is important because I am using autobiographical memory for this project. Having the courage to use my own original images might allow a viewer to feel the work in a way that compresses the space between us.

I visited a hardware store to get tools and knowledge for reworking the surfaces of personal photographs with sandpaper. I then selected a bunch of 'useless' snapshots and began practising. The dust was fine and pungent. The process of recollecting while sanding was meditative. I detached from everyday life, yet was present in it. This freeing of mental space created a typology of reflection. I talked myself through memories and the theatrics of process.

Relishing the discipline and control, I learned how to achieve a particular look based on grit size, handedness, pattern of movement, and pressure applied. I sought to animate the photograph's surface, wanting my marks to emphasise the magic and chaos of transforming my material past by transforming surfaces and subject matter.

[25] Geoffrey Batchen, *Suspending Time: Life – Photography – Death* (Japan: Izu Photo Museum and Nohara, 2010), 122.
[26] Annette Kuhn, introduction to *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London, UK: Verso, 1995), 4.

Fig. 17. Untitled work-in-progress (2015)

I rehearsed my making many times before developing a method [figure 17]. Using circular movements and a small piece of sandpaper to start before becoming bolder, I switched to different sandpapers, scaling back my gestures to 'finish'. I then 'rested' the photograph, returning later to make small adjustments. I based these adjustments on what Nelson Goodman calls an "aesthetic quality of rightness."[27] It 'looked' good and 'felt' good, and thus satisfied me. Between each performance of memory was a period of reflection.

The next challenge was choosing which of my family snapshots to rework. In most of them, people are looking at the lens. I decided to use snapshots where I couldn't see the main subject's face as this ambiguity would alter their reading. As maker and subject, I also found it more gratifying to reflect on them as images because they no longer reflected a face in return.[28]

Sanding the first few was trickier than anticipated because the act of sanding is destructive. My 'reworking' personal snapshots with my eyes and hands wrestled with mentally 'reworking' of the past. But this reworking helped a new contemplative photographic space to emerge.

[27] Light and Smith, *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, 8.
[28] James Elkins, *What Photography Is* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 44.

For example, in *Diffidence* we see a woman standing alone [figure 18]. She appears composed but we cannot determine if she is at ease. Her dress, hair, and earrings suggest she is at an event that requires a polished presentation. The position of her arms implies she is holding something (a bag or purse, a bouquet, a glass). From the position and tilt of her head we can see her attention is elsewhere, perhaps facing another person, listening or talking to them. Some of this information tells us the woman was not the primary subject. The original focus and intent is no longer available; the scratched surface places her into the spotlight.

Drawn into her presence, the viewer, alongside the artist, takes the role of a translator. Without other recognisable detail, the viewer contemplates loss, why it matters and what it means – and then fills in the gaps. While this manner of experiencing my snapshots might lead a viewer's associative thoughts to the preservation of history and nostalgia, the creative process I am employing also is a critical contemporary comment on the malleability of the photograph, which runs counter to its link to indexicality.

Fig. 18. *Diffidence* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

As I added sanded snapshots to the series, which I titled *Excavations*, I noticed how many represent our family farm. In particular, I noted my smallness relative to the wide-open space around me. I may have been the prompt for many snapshots, but I was not always the dominant subject. The farm also was an important character. This farm, my home until my teenage years, was critical to the person I became. Memories of my earliest intimate relationships are 'in' this place. These snapshots, then, define my background.

These reveries and considerations led me to using scale and format as key elements of the series. Using a modified version of my mother's Kodak Instamatic and expired film, I began re-photographing the backgrounds of these snapshots.[29] I called them 'back-scapes'. After processing, I made large contact sheets in the darkroom. This was the only way I could make prints by hand that replicated the size and shape of the original Instamatic prints, approximately 3x3". The contact sheets were then guillotined and sanded.

I lived with these small sanded 'backscapes' in my studio for several weeks. I didn't want to manipulate them further because they were a different type of 'original'. From this awareness, a new approach evolved. If I used the sanded images as paper 'negatives', I could scan and print them larger, then give them a final sand, which also would be unrepeatable. Autobiographical memory works the same way. Our memories are original, but when we retrieve and recover them, we change some of the detail creating a 'new' original.

By re-presenting the 'backscapes' as enlarged contemporary pigment prints and squared-off, this situates the subject outside of its original context and intention. In *Excavation #8* the image is almost completely devoid of its original content, beyond splotches and slivers of colour [figure 19]. The stripping away of visual information around glimpses of visual clues signposts two important ideas about a reworked photograph as an imaginative device. First, the image reinterprets my past as I see it in snapshots and recall it in memory. Second, it allows a viewer to imagine and make sense of the content for themselves.

Often when we see an old and faded object, we speculate what it may have looked like in its original form, before time and nature ruined its appearance, personality, or functionality. This ruination is what sandpapering reinforces. It turns the snapshot, both its content and object-hood, into a new consideration about what we remember, what we forget, and what we must imagine.

[29] Using this type of film adds another layer to the work, because it is no longer produced.

Fig. 19. *Excavation #8* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

These abstract works borrow their names from the series title [figure 20]. Numbering each piece acts as a deeper exploration about what comes to the surface when almost everything recognisable or known is no longer. Alongside these, the original vintage snapshots, presented in deep-set boxes during their debut solo exhibition at Klompching Gallery in New York [figure 21], maintain the intimacy of the family album, but contextualised as museum-like artefacts. The title for each of these is an interpretation of what the figure was thinking or feeling at the time. This offers an approximation of the snapshot's undertone. But the titles also suggest the emotional sensation I may have felt during my acts of reworking them.

Fig. 20. Installation of *Excavations* at Klompching Gallery, New York (2016)

Fig. 21. Installation of *Excavations* at Klompching Gallery, New York (2016)

Excavations explores the complexities of material interface with intangible concepts. The social space of family storytelling is an invisible process into which we are born. We share colourful narratives, sometimes using snapshots as cues. We on-tell these stories and join them, or add to them, through photography. As a child, I loved hearing the friendly arguments from misremembering or embellishing the visual 'facts'. It is this exaggeration that using sandpaper afforded. I blurred detail, smoothed areas, roughened up patches, and removed people or landscapes altogether.

This is clear in *Melancholy* in which a couple stands together, staring into an unknown abyss [figure 22]. The image immediately prompts questions related to loss: Who are these people? Where are they? What are they looking at, and why? Through questioning, the viewer is lead to survey the ruins, to scrutinise, and read figurative clues. And through this altered, prolonged type of looking, it becomes clear the snapshot, usually an object of sentiment and value, is now an obscured, unreliable, uncanny semblance of identity.

Fig. 22. *Melancholy* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

Grinding and polishing these snapshots also is a literal assault. There is a 'no turning back'. But the act of sanding was not spurred by contempt. Instead, it re-choreographs stories beyond the album. The space of the photograph is reset. Reworking manipulates the past, remaking it in the present.

As Stephen Jay Gould and Rosamond Wolff Purcell write of destruction related to art and science,

> …destruction can wipe a slate clean and create space for novelty that would otherwise never had won an opportunity. The pathways may be peculiar and unpredictable at all scales, but the results can be wondrous.[30]

This resonates with the act of sandpapering. Through destruction I reveal the 'bare bones' of the snapshot's framework. A viewer may add their history and memories, which may allow new meanings to rise from the marks I make.

Destruction as a form of creation is not new in art. Marcel Duchamp's self-portraits, Lucio Fontana's cuts in fabric and Lode Laperre's scraped canvases are some of the many examples. But rarely is it applied to photography. Why? Because of what a snapshot *is* and what it *does* to us. It is a personal and constructed compression of our 'selves' and our being. It is a unique visual record of the 'facts' depicted in it; an indexical sign difficult to overlook. A snapshot also can reveal our deepest desires and fears because it reminds us, in the present, that the future will become the past.

Similarly, the ruined fragments of classical and medieval art and architecture maintain an aesthetic foothold today. That which is missing or lost enhances ancient art, allowing space for the imagination. We enlarge them in our minds. They in turn reflect feelings of romance and melancholy.

But any act of image destruction, ruin, or breaking of rules cannot remove what a viewer is not privy to: my 'holding' of the snapshot in memory. I have seen what the snapshots once were. The viewer cannot access this visual knowledge.

There is a similarity between my work and Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* [figure 23, left]. In 1953, a young Rauschenberg visited de Kooning at his New York studio and asked for one of his drawings so that he could erase it.[31] De Kooning purposely chose an image he would "miss" and that would be "very hard to erase".[32] Rauschenberg then spent two months trying to remove the image.[33] Both artists thus saw the original drawing before it was reworked.

[30] Stephen J Gould and Rosamond Wolff Purcell. *Crossing Over: Where Art and Science Meet* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 39.
[31] Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan. *De Kooning: An American Master* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 358-359.
[32] Ibid., 360.
[33] Ibid.

In *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, erasure is generative. Critic Leo Steinberg described it as, "a sort of collaboration" in creation through destruction.[34] No photograph exists of *Erased de Kooning Drawing* in its original incarnation. This makes Rauschenberg's piece even more intriguing. Its value exists in appreciating the 'new' artwork created through the physical and psychological act of erasure, alongside our innate curiosity about what Rauschenberg actually removed [figure 24, right].[35]

Fig. 23. Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953)
Fig. 24. Ben Blackwell and Robin D. Myers, digitally enhanced infrared scan of Robert Rauscheberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (2010)

In *Excavations*, 'not knowing' creates speculation. It provokes a viewer to mentally map their subjective version of 'knowing' into the vacant space of the reworked photograph.

Someone asked me whether I had gone too far and made 'un-photographs' through erasing the photographic foundation. At first glance, they could be mistaken for paintings or drawings. But their photographic-ness is a significant part of their tension. Moreover, accurate visual depiction is unimportant in these images. I am making the photographic print functionless and yet imbuing it with my own hand, which may enhance its aura and significance to my memory archive. What knowledge, then, do these excavations uncover?

[34] Leo Steinberg, *Encounters with Rauschenberg* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 19.
[35] Visit to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, July 2016.

The images are mesmerising for what we cannot see in full: the photographic referent. This makes the importance of the snapshot as a memory-based object more beguiling and yet more perplexing. It both refutes and acknowledges photography's power. Transforming detail into abstraction creates space for new stories to emerge.

In *Excavation #2*, for example, the sanding mimics the contours of what the camera recorded as subject matter [figure 25]. But, the visible trace of my gestures in the form of lines, sweeping arches and circular movements now *become* subject matter. The image challenges how past events are re-presented to us through photography. It questions how the past can influence our thoughts and beliefs in the present. It also suggests we need a lot less information than we do to make meaning: we 'read' into what remains in the image.

Fig. 25. *Excavation #2* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

Through reworking the viewer becomes alert to things and spaces that were not the point of the original photograph. The ordinary and unimportant fragments of life that James Elkins suggests is "a problem…because it implies that the *punctum* is wider, and wilder, than accounts of vernacular photography can admit".[36] There is no longer anything common or everyday about them. The periphery is now wide and wild.

[36] James Elkins, "What Do We Want Photography To Be? Response to Michael Fried, "Barthes's *Punctum*," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005): 946-947.

Fig. 26. *Discomfort* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

Discomfort is a good example [figure 26]. The male figure sits, hands folded. His facial expression is unreadable. He is not engaging with the camera, nor anything or anyone else. The sanding around him is heavy and deep, and encroaches on his form. The photograph has become 'thing' and 'experience' through process, metaphor, and subtext.

This process is central to the autobiographical photographs of Jo Spence, who writes:

> Reworking [snapshots] is initially painful, confusing, extreme. As I become more aware of how I have been constructed ideologically, as the *method* becomes clearer, there is no peeling away of layers, to reveal a 'real' self, just a constant reworking process. I realise I am a process.[37]

Excavations is a series of photographic objects that aims to highlight the intangibility of feelings. I achieved this through embodied knowledge and through material and sensory encounter. These co-evolved during the process of making. To 'excavate' signifies something deep and significant. Instead of a "peeling away of layers," through using sandpaper I reworked the surfaces of my past and present selves.

[37] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 135.

They also are images with potential for residue to engender meaning. A viewer reads and interprets the remaining fields of marks, lines, and traces. They may 'see' me at work, in process, thinking with my sandpaper. They may wonder about my decision to rub and scrape the prints. They may ask: was it an act of reverence, aggravation, comedy, or construction?

In *Excavations #1*, the physicality of the image influences a viewer's interpretation of what remains [figure 27]. Simultaneously, this physicality, and the duality of absence versus presence, *is* the content. I think of *Excavations* in context of one of French Romantic artist Eugene Delacroix's journal entries: "The most striking photographs are those in which certain gaps are left, owing to the failure of the process itself to give a complete rendering. Such gaps bring relief to the eyes…"[38]

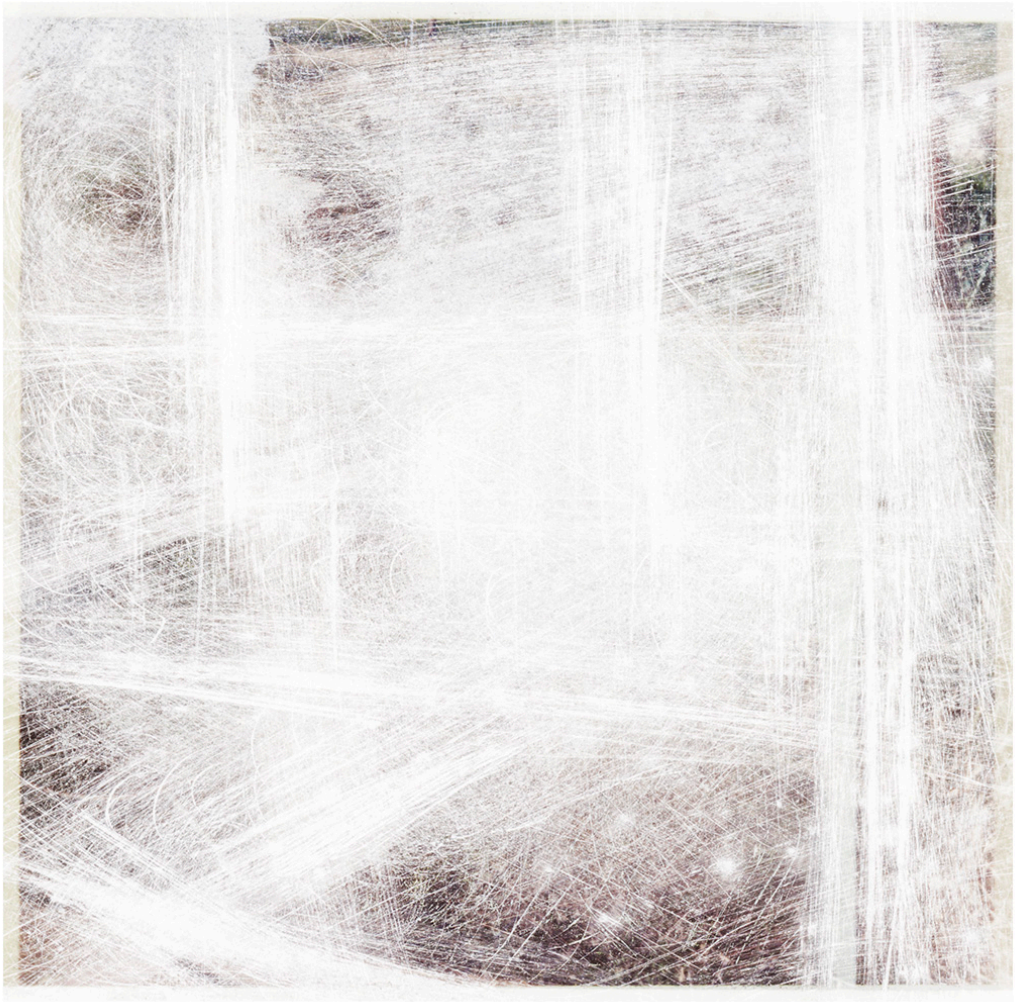

Fig. 27. *Excavation #1* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

[38] Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 112.

In this research, there is the space I inhabit as a maker-subject: the private space of the mind and the artist studio. There also is the space into which I invite the viewer, giving them room to contemplate, imagine, and relate. These two spaces have driven my interest in conceiving and occupying a new space, one that links the process of practice-based research with autobiographical memory and photographs.

A New Space

Geoffrey Batchen argues "… the act of remembering someone is surely also about the positioning of oneself about the affirmation of one's own place in time and space."[39] This prompted me to reflect further on the functions of *photographs* and *photographing* within autobiographical memory.

Photography through its indexicality gives power to the snapshot. Snapshots carry autobiographical memory in a way that is distinct to other visual art forms. They are soaked in life episodes. Memory in this context serves a similar function.[40] We use it to solve problems and guide future actions.[41] We also use it to maintain social bonds, as points of interaction and conversation, to create and maintain our identity, and to influence mood.[42]

Sometimes a photograph is the only indexical record of an object or event. Sometimes a memory is all that exists because no one had a camera. Through photographs and recollection, we can imagine. They allow us to take things from the 'wild' and sort, catalogue, and display them in our minds.

When we recall a memory or when we look at a photograph, we create a fragile space to occupy temporarily. It is neither 'here' nor 'there'. It is real and imagined. What if these spaces could fold into one, into a space constituted through the act of memory retrieval and engagement with photographs?

When I look at *Concern* for example I am caught between two dispositions [figure 28]. One toward what the photograph shows or incites; the other toward what I recall or revise based on my memory of the lost historical snapshot and its autobiographical content. These inclinations overlap, blur, and affect each other every time I encounter *Concern*. Thus, *Concern* reconceives the photographic medium in material terms, as an object, and in spatial terms by opening up the surface of the print.

[39] Batchen, *Forget Me Not*, 97.
[40] Helen L. Williams, Martin A, Conway, and Gillian Cohen, "Autobiographical memory," in *Memory in the Real World*, ed. Gillian Cohen and Martin A. Conway (Hove, UK: Psychology Press, 2008), 23-24.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

Fig. 28. *Concern* from the series *Excavations* (2015)

Others have suggested or implied a virtual space in autobiographical memory and intimate relationships.[43] In the context of this research, could I propose such a space in relationship to memory *and* photographs? I needed to be mindful that photographs also can impose limitations on the imagination because of their specificity: *that* person, *that* event, *that* location.

Such a space might be perceptual, malleable, and transitory. It might occur each time one looks at a photograph while retrieving and recalling a memory, or vice versa. It might embody some of the qualities of a dream or illusion. These activities can, as memory expert Jefferson Singer suggests, "…make you feel like you are living in that image's moment rather than the present one."[44] It is this feeling of being overtaken and immersed in a space of the past-present I need to explore further through practice-based research.

[43] See, for example, Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (German: *Asthetische Theorie*). Cited by Richard Westerman, "Meaning, Memory and Identity: The Western Marxists' Hermeneutic Subject," *Continental Philosophy Review* (July 2015): 30, doi: 10.1007/s11007-015-9331-7; Mitchell et al., "Facing the Public: Using Photography for Self-Study and Social Action," 119; Richard White, introduction to *Love's Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 7. Batchen also suggests a similar space between the snapshot and its relationship to life and death in *Suspending Time*, 126.
[44] Singer, *Memories That Matter*, 25.

Summary

My foundation work emphasises the tension of what a viewer can and cannot hold from a photograph to create understanding. It highlights the manipulability of snapshots, in opposition to photography's indexical nature. By reworking the specificity of the snapshot, I started to suspend my bond with it. This in turn allows a viewer's bond to form.

Through the series *On Objects of Intimacy* I explored how relocating representation allows a new aesthetic connection between past and present to emerge. In *Temporarily Yours* I argued that reworked snapshots provide their own space for a viewer. In *Excavations*, I established the significance of materiality in how a viewer makes meaning from fragments of the personal, and that engagement with the print through material and sensory encounter influences viewer perception. 'Encounter' highlights how reworking snapshots turns objects of sentiment into complicated, instable fragments of the past.

In each series, transforming detail into symbolic abstraction creates space for new stories to materialise. The prospect of virtual space connecting autobiographical memory with photographs became a conduit through which I could approach photography in a more reformist manner.

Reflecting about autobiographical memory and the act of photography dwells *in* and *on* space. This space is prone to displacement and irregularity in the course of making. Given my interest in the subjectivity of perception and the plasticity of meanings one invests in memory and personal photographs, it became necessary to further investigate the syndromes of how chronesthesia (mental time travel) and recollection recovery guide creative production.

A significant realisation to emerge from this research phase was that I could not use the single photograph I have of my first romantic love and me as material for art making. For you, it may be just a picture of two teenagers in love. For me, the virtual space of this photograph contains all the time of our relationship. To produce representations of my intimate relationship history I did not need to rework or reveal this special snapshot. Instead its primary function was to become an interface in the studio to which I could defer in the thinking and reflecting phases.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISATION

Chapter Introduction

In chapter one, a review of my work pre-candidature informed approaches to practice. Reworking selves through reworking snapshots indicated potential to identify a new space linking autobiographical memory to photography.

Throughout this process, I engaged in mental time travel, also known as chronesthesia. Chronesthesia was first defined by Endel Tulving. It is a hypothetical ability of the mind letting us perceive the past and the future. We place self in a virtual space of subjective time.[45] Chronesthesia relates to neurocognitive functions associated with time including recollection of past events.

Henri Bergson's theory of recollection recovery is significant in relation to chronesthesia and my research questions in proposing a unique relationship among past, present, and future, which impacts memory:

> Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act of *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past – a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual…[46]

Recollection is fundamental to autobiographical memory, which differentiates it from dreaming and imagining, and from the recovery of facts about ourselves.[47] Our ongoing stories are in constant flux, shaped and influenced by many factors including past events and how we position ourselves within them.[48] Expanding on this, there is an implied ongoing reworking and relocation of self within a private virtual space of our past/present.

Our histories also have material and symbolic effects on the person we become. If our past forms through stories, memories, fiction, and illusion, one could consider that the past is never 'over'. We cannot be 'done' with our autobiography. Adapting Bergson, our 'self', both actual and recollected, is an ongoing work of readjustment. We change in response to circumstances and stimuli. We also change how we see ourselves; our self-concept and state of mind is influenced by where we are and what we are doing at any given moment.

[45] Endel Tulving, "Chronesthesia: Conscious Awareness of Subjective Time," in *Principles of Frontal Lobe Function*, ed. Donald T. Stuss and Robert T. Knight (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 311.
[46] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 73.
[47] David C. Rubin, Robert W. Schrauf, and Daniel L. Greenberg, "Belief and Recollection of Autobiographical Memories," *Memory & Cognition* 31, no. 6 (2003): 887.
[48] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225.

This is key to the evolution of this research. Through the making of *Excavations*, for instance, I learned how adjusting surfaces influenced and 'adjusted' me in different ways, explained in chapter one. For example, from the perspective of the owner and subject of snapshots and from an artist seeking to make new artefacts through reworking them. Reworking records what photography alone cannot capture: the space between self-defining memories of intimate relationships and the reworked photograph encountered by the viewer.

I also recognised that reworking snapshots is the secondary form of destruction and ruin occurring in my studio. The first is the act of recollection recovery, which always contains elements of fiction and loss. Every time we mentally time travel and recollect we create a new 'us' as a restructure of self. The dynamics of past, present, and future cloud as we encounter and interact with images. But memory does not travel well without translation. Mental landscapes are susceptible to bias. Revising my adaptation of Bergson: my 'self', then, is *an ongoing work of subjective and selective readjustment.* Understanding this readjustment through practice is necessary for addressing my research questions.

This chapter examines the roles of chronesthesia and recollection recovery with reference to three works. These are Roland Barthes' text *Camera Lucida* (1980), Guy Archard's photography book *Almost* (2013), and Bill Morrison's found footage film *Decasia* (2002). I survey this broader field of references to place my story into a wider historical and cultural framework, and discuss how they represent memory and propose links with my work.

I also contextualise and further discuss the prospect and significance of a new space connecting autobiographical memory with photography.

Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida* and 'Flat Death'

Roland Barthes first used the term "flat death" in his book *Camera Lucida* (1980). It follows his discussion of a treasured snapshot taken in 1898, known as the Winter Garden Photograph. It is an image of his mother Henriette, aged five, which the book omits:

> With the Photograph, we enter into *flat Death*. The horror is this: nothing to say about the death of one whom I love most, nothing to say about her photograph, which I contemplate without ever being able to get to the heart of it, to transform it. The only "thought" I can have is that at the end of this first death, my own death is inscribed; between the two, nothing more than waiting…[49]

[49] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), 92-93.

Barthes' work relates to mine beyond the capacity of personal photographs to communicate with others as with the self. Absence of the Winter Garden photograph is key. It may explain Barthes argument that photography and memory "do not mix"; for Barthes, memory was more sensation than image.[50] Though photography and memory arguably intertwine, there are different types of photographs and different types of memory, and these tend not to function in the same ways.[51] As Geoffrey Batchen posits, "Can you ever really *know* someone from a photograph? Has photography quietly replaced your memories with its own?"[52]

It is an unusual experience trying to decipher a snapshot you cannot see. The more I re-read Barthes narrative, the more I *saw* the Winter Garden photograph in my mind's eye but the less I *knew* about it. For Barthes, the 'insider' to the image, it perpetuates an enigma because it contains signs for recalling his idealised other.

However, Barthes need not have reproduced the Winter Garden photograph for me to make meaning from it. Doing so would change my relationship with his writing of it and thus its ability to touch me. Seeing the picture also will reinforce that his mother is a girl I don't know. In contrast, for Barthes it is laden with narrative and a knowing. This may be why he used it as inspiration and solace at his writing desk.[53] I do the same with snapshots I hold dear, such as the photograph of my first romantic love.

Philosopher Erin Mitchell notes that through absence of the Winter Garden photograph Barthes controls interpretation of the image.[54] But this overlooks the capacity for a viewer to use other routes to understanding. I propose that Barthes's grief revealed in the text is palpable and relatable in a way only possible by the Winter Garden photograph's absence.

Barthes's recollections take us from within our own retrospection to a virtual space between him and us, between his mother and ours, and between the Winter Garden photograph and our snapshots. It is through these dualities we create and inhabit a new virtual space.

[50] Batchen, *Forget Me Not*, 15.
[51] Ibid., 14.
[52] Ibid., 15.
[53] Elkins, *What Photography Is,* 42-43.
[54] Erin Mitchell, "Writing Photography: The Grandmother in Remembrance of Things Past, the Mother in Camera Lucida, and Especially, the Mother in The Lover," *Studies in 20th Century Literature* 24, no. 2 (2000): 326.

Absence also allows us to mentally picture Barthes's relationship with his mother. This type of "virtual photography"[55] empowers the mind to build a new experience more relatable and relevant to the self. Thus, Henriette becomes a subjective recreation of autobiographical memory: someone we once knew, an image we once saw.

Barthes uses the word 'contemplate' in context of the Winter Garden photograph, a Latin root the meaning of which is *templum*, a sacred space and time set aside for careful observation and deep thought in which one is wholly present.[56] In classical antiquity, the *templum* also was a site for prophesy through the interpretation of signs in nature.[57]

It is here I draw a parallel among the *templum* and the sacred precincts of the snapshot, the gallery or museum, and the artist studio. Each requires one to view, reflect upon, and interpret signs and symbols to derive meaning. Each also is delineated by the field of vision toward a specific space. The gallery or museum, for example, is where a viewer is most likely to encounter my prints. These spaces amplify "looking, gazing, seeing, noticing".[58] Thus, they heighten a viewer's sense of my work as artefacts of the past-present.

In chapter one I identified absence as key to informing practice, where the studio is my *templum*, a physical space and a space of the mind. Absence also influences how I enact self-as-artist. For instance, one assumes that as a photographer I use a camera. Could this be something I subvert, where framing and reframing do not always occur in the viewfinder? Where I regard photographing as a spatial practice of the mind and the hands, turning a memory into a physical presence? I explored these ideas in *Excavations*. Now I saw potential for further development.

Psychologist Susan Engel reminds us, "Every memory journeys from its first vivid moment within a person to its multifarious transformations and uses within the world."[59] Every memory we have relies not only on our internal experience of recollection to maintain it, but also on public transaction. For Barthes, this involved sharing memories of his mother by concealing the object that both informs and deforms those memories.

[55] Ibid., 325.
[56] "Contemplate," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed January 19, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/contemplate.
[57] Neil Campbell and Alfredo Cramerotti, *Photocinema: The Creative Edges of Photography and Film* (Bristol, England: Intellect Books, 2013), 85.
[58] Mitchell, Weber, and Pithouse, "Facing the Public: Using Photography for Self-Study and Social Action," 127.
[59] Susan Engel, introduction to *Context is Everything: The Nature of Memory* (New York, NY: W. H. Freeman & Company, 1999), 3.

In context of my practice, something a viewer sees in my creative works will likely merge with something they recall in their own life. It is this 'merging' of memory with imagination that creates a new virtual space.

But the potential for a photograph to create connections for a viewer depends as much on that viewer's mental activity as it does on the material or sensorial qualities of the image. A photograph is a cue; it can only trigger a richer, fuller picture if a viewer has imagination, information, and a desire to recollect. For this photograph to be meaningful to others, an 'opening' is necessary.

This is key to my research. For when we look at any photograph and mentally time travel or recall a memory, our link to the 'real thing' depicted severs. It is replaced by its connection with information and images stored mentally.

To further assess the effects of absences within personal photographs, I refer to Guy Archard's photobook *Almost* (2012). His work illustrates how an 'opening' or gap enlightens and beguiles the viewer. It also signposts ideas for more creative experimentation.

Guy Archard: *Almost*

Almost by Guy Archard comprises 40 photographic images, mostly expired peel-apart Polaroids. Interspersed with the images Guy made over a five-year period are photographs taken by his father Graham between 1976 and 1983.[60]

Some have interpreted the book as a study of beauty and decay, and life and death.[61] This limits a more sophisticated reading. Initially, I thought of *Almost* as a reworked chapter of Archard's family history because of the many absences within the book. There are no page numbers, titles, or explanatory text, anything that gives reference to what the images are of or about. Though text about artworks can be prescriptive, a lack of writing places emphasis on the visuals, which bestows inference. In Archard's view: "I think you can give too much away with the writing… When all the loose ends are perfectly tied up, it leaves nothing to the imagination."[62]

[60] Guy Archard, *Almost* (London: Bemojake, 2013), unpaginated.
[61] Including by the publisher. Bemojake, "Almost by Guy Archard," accessed January 20, 2016, http://www.bemojake.eu/Almost_description.html
[62] Pauline Magnenat, "Guy Archard, 25, London," *All of This is Rocket Science*, accessed January 19, 2016, http://rocketscience.tumblr.com/post/2626509022/guy-archard-25-london.

Some of Archard's images appear straight out-of-camera. Others look treated or manipulated, such as the tipped-in cover image of a potted plant [figure 29, left]. Some are wholly abstract. I found myself staring at this Polaroid [figure 30, right], waiting for something to appear within the cool blue-green colour produced by the interacting layers of chemistry. Through abstraction, Archard conveys atmosphere and mood, which in this example I read as sadness and decay.

Fig. 29. Guy Archard, *Almost* (2013)
Fig. 30. Guy Archard, *Almost* (2013)

While perusing the book I became aware of the arbitrary positioning of the images [figure 31]. The blank pages create material and mental pauses for the reader. The choreography of the book mirrors the family album. These were often home to different film formats and print sizes, with gaps around or between images. In my foundation series *Temporarily Yours*, the space around the circles offers a similar opportunity to linger or rest in visual silence.

Fig. 31. Guy Archard, page spread from *Almost* (2013)

Many images speak to absence or loss. For example, the fading and scarring of this Polaroid negative of a dog on a jetty looking out to the water [figure 32]. Pulling apart the alchemy associated with the peel-apart Polaroid is a way for Archard to probe how we document and narrate memories, and then recall and reimagine them. This process aligns with my sandpapering unique prints. In *Excavations* and in *Almost*, each image represents layers of personal experience. These layers unfold through a variety of formal and aesthetic characteristics: tone, surface quality, and contrast.

Fig. 32. Guy Archard, *Almost* (2013)

A gatefold near the centre of the book caught my attention. The images contain recurrent motifs and metaphors for loss: windows, natural light, dying flora, and moths [figure 33]. These common scenes and objects act as signifiers to a state of 'being' akin to those I used in *Temporarily Yours*. Of wonder, fragility, serenity, and transience. Although personal to Archard, these are recurring scenes and objects the viewer can recognise and relate to. They invite the viewer to imagine their own relationships with them or make new stories about them.

While we may associate recurrence with boredom or monotony, in *Almost* it heightens viewer response. It stresses an implied importance of these scenes and objects as integral to understanding what the book is about. It also reinforces that they contain inherent sensations or emotional qualities known to affect a viewer in a certain way.

Fig. 33. Guy Archard, page spread from *Almost* (2013)

Recurrence is an essential element of self-defining memories, not because we repeatedly recall them but because they tend to contain recurring characters and storylines. I saw that recurrence of thought, process, and subject could play a powerful role in my ongoing studio investigations.

Archard rephotographed many of his images, often many times over to produce a new 'single' image.[63] The images are thus visual, virtual, and spatial modifications. Their original spatial information is impossible to decipher. We don't know how many times Archard rephotographed them, or in what order. Nor do we know for certain which ones Guy took and which were taken by his father.

These absences are a conceptual decoy. The fragmentary layout, the oblique and recursive nature of subject matter, and the rigorous layering create riddles. We don't know what or who is 'almost'. This not knowing, emphasised by the lack of text, becomes an allegory for contemporary longing.

[63] "Guy Archard – Photographer in Residence," *Fotografia*, July 20, 2015, accessed January 20, 2016, http://fotografiamagazine.com/guy-archard-photographer-in-residence/.

Given the word 'almost' means nearly, bordering on, more or less, it suits the description of a subjective space of the mind. As such, *Almost* may be better understood as a story about the subjective readjustment of self within intimate relationship histories, between father and son, between the front and back of the photograph, between original and copy. It could be Archard's visual meditation on being 'almost done' with a subset of his past, a photographic undressing and redressing of his 'selves'.

Through analysis of Archard's work came two new approaches to studio production. First, using *displacement* as a specific type of reworking snapshots, I could draw from their physical presence in different ways to those used in my foundation work. For example, I might further displace the shape of the frame as in *Temporarily Yours*, or displace image quality and subject matter through translucency or tonality. Through these sorts of decisions and processes, I can convey that autobiographical memories do not always reappear fluently or sequentially.

The second method is ensuring my work provokes *interaction* for selves and the viewer. Reworked photographs may help mental time travel and recollection recovery occur if we visually *and* physically touch their surfaces. James Elkins provides examples of these two kinds of touching in interacting with photographs. He summarises them as "handling" and "optical feel":

> When I hand someone a photograph, I am touching its surface. If the print was made in a darkroom, my fingers slide or grip the water-resistant coating, and I can feel the paper base that holds the layers of dyes and silver halide molecules. If the photo is onscreen, I may touch the glass to point out something, smearing it a little with the grease in my fingertip. My eyes can touch the surface of a photograph. If it is a print made in a darkroom, I can see its surface as a *griffonage* (an illegible handwriting) of marks and scratches. If it's onscreen, I can just barely make out the fuzzy mosaic of RGB sub-pixels or, if it's an older monitor, the woolly RGB phosphor dots.[64]

This resonates with my research for how a personal photograph can touch and hold the viewer. Merging "handling" and the "optical feel" can allow me to progress from accentuating photographic surfaces alone, as I had in *Excavations*.

Relating Elkins theory to *Almost*: viewing photographs in book form has the advantage of spurring affection through looking and touching. In turning pages, the viewer puts Archard's past and present in motion.[65] This gesture animates and personalises the images through mental embellishment. It stirs emotions by allowing the viewer to conjure the events that may have prompted the photographer's desire to capture them.

[64] Elkins, *What Photography Is,* 24-26.
[65] Batchen, *Forget Me Not*, 49.

As the viewer turns the pages, their arm moves in a semicircle. They can be sequential or non-sequential, which blurs the distinction between past and present. They can enjoy the rhythm of a story *they* create. This overlapping of subjective intervention in what we recognise in Archard's images becomes a conduit to a virtual space. And it is in this new space conjured by the viewer that they find relevance and meaning

These reflections informed practice and helped frame my analysis of Bill Morrison's film *Decasia*.

Bill Morrison: *Decasia*

For *Decasia* (2002) Morrison spliced together footage from decaying movies shot on nitrate film. This flammable material is prone to rot, which is an unstoppable process. Morrison eschewed digital trickery to create the story, instead using processes such as slowing down the film. These intensify through the film's orchestral soundtrack.

Decasia has garnered close attention from critics since its release. This includes analysis of its thematic sensibilities such as motifs for life and death. For example, this still of a monarch butterfly [figure 34].[66] Also discussed is the film's use of repetition, displacement and dislocation, and its similarities with memory[67] and romance.[68]

Fig. 34. Bill Morrison, still from *Decasia* (2002)

[66] See, for example, Michele Pierson, "Avant-Garde Re-Enactment: World Mirror Cinema, Decasia, and The Heart of the World," *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 1 (2009): 1-19; and Ursula Boser, "Inscriptions of Light and The 'Calligraphy of Decay': Volatile Representation in Bill Morrison's *Decasia*," in *Avant-Garde Film*, ed. Alexander Graf and Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007): 305-320.
[67] Jason Hibbard, "The Fear of Forgetting: Decasia and Contemporary 'Memory Culture'", (paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Minimalist Music, University of Missouri-Kansas City, September 2-6, 2009): 20-21.
[68] Claudy op den Kemp, "Decasia: Plus belle que la beauté est la ruine de la beauté," *Offscreen* 8, no. 11 (2004), accessed January 20, 2016, http://offscreen.com/view/beaute.

Decasia offers three distinctive traits relevant to my research: interweaving, original versus copy, and viewer recollection.

Interweaving is the combining or blending of things, which need not be in a regular or alternating way.[69] In *Decasia*, Morrison interweaves fictional and narrative films with documentary footage. It becomes unclear which is which. In doing so, he reworks the archive. Morrison tells a new story based on a collapsing of the past/present. This evokes a sort of paramnesia in the viewer, the phenomenon where fact and fantasy confuse or distort.[70]

In my research, interweaving refers to influencing the space of a photograph, where 'space' is visible and virtual. Interweaving also is a function of my studio behaviour. I recall and combine self-defining memories, using snapshots as prompts. I then use these mental 're-workings' to generate creative thought in material form.

The second trait is *Decasia's* construction as a new 'original' story made from copies of original footage. Morrison rephotographed pieces of original films on an optical printer.[71] This displaces notions of what 'original' and 'copy' mean over time.

One of the most compelling qualities of *Decasia* is the ruination of original matter. The rotting nitrate film is alarming. The viewer sees bubbles; orbs; bits that clot, jump or shake; flashes of light; streaky smudges; and other distortions. The same is true of *Excavations*. Sandpapering snapshots emphasises loss. Through recollection and then ruination, we reproduce and rework 'original' photographs. Though mine is a deliberate and conscious gesture of hand-sanding in contrast to the chemical breakdown of the images that Morrison deliberately chooses, we both locate something new and original that may have otherwise remained unknown.

Decasia and *Excavations* also highlight the fear associated with losing originals precious to us. They do this by speaking of some of life's most affective dualities such as temporary versus permanent and lost versus found. In *Decasia,* this dialogue occurs through the experience of sensory phenomena. The emotional merging of the material and sensorial with select content, often in a state of meditation or delirium.

[69] Definition of interweave. "Interweave," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed February 2, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/interweave.
[70] Definition of paramnesia. "Paramnesia," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed February 2, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paramnesia.
[71] Cynthia Rowell, "Decasia: The State of Decay (review)," *The Moving Image* 5, no. 1 (2005): 143-147.

This still from *Decasia* illustrates this emotional merging [figure 35]. A girl riding a school bus stares at the camera. She is aware of being a 'subject', but is impervious to it. The left and right sides of the frame flicker with what looks like an invasion of parasites or sheets of ice cracking. This is the decomposing nitrate film interacting with the original image. Together, the visual record of the past and the degrading film create a prolonged reflection on impermanence and loss. It is as if we are witnessing the realisation that this girl will decay too.

Fig. 35. Bill Morrison, still from *Decasia* (2002)

The third trait of *Decasia* relevant to my research relates to its features that provoke recollection within a viewer. Except for Michelle Pierson's insights into *Decasia* as an historical re-enactment this escaped close examination.[72] I found a clue in examining how others wrote about the film's impact in virtual spatial terms. For example, as "hallucinatory," "hypnotic," "as if you are watching the transmission of a lost dream," a "sublime vista," and "a state of reflection on human mortality".[73]

[72] Pierson, "Avant-Garde Re-Enactment," 1-19.
[73] See, for example, Dennis Harvey, "Review: 'Decasia'," *Variety*, February 1, 2002, accessed January 20, 2016, http://variety.com/2002/film/markets-festivals/decasia-1200551602/; Eric David Johnson, "Bill Morrison's Decasia: The State of Decay," *BOMB* 87, Spring 2004, accessed January 20, 2016, http://bombmagazine.org/article/5530/bill-morrison-s-decasia-the-state-of-decay; Jonathan Jones, "Ghost World," *The Guardian*, September 27, 2003, accessed January 20, 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/sep/26/art; and Andre Habib, "Thinking in the Ruins: Around the Films of Bill Morrison," *Offscreen* 8 no. 11 (2004), accessed January 20, 2016, http://offscreen.com/view/morrison.

Both Tulving and Bergson took an interest in these irregularities of the mind. Bergson discerned they could do something or bring something new to the person experiencing them:

> A delirium, a hallucination, an obsession, are positive facts. They consist in the presence, not the absence, of something. They seem to introduce into the mind certain new ways of feeling and thinking.[74]

Given that I am trying to associate facets of my outer and inner world through art practice, this requires more detailed analysis and discussion.

Hallucinations are intense mental experiences involving the perception of something not present.[75] In *hypnosis*, the conscious mind enters a new space in which the hypnotised person no longer has control over their actions.[76] This makes them vulnerable and receptive to suggestion.[77] In *dreams* our mind creates images, ideas and feelings, where things feel present and yet out of reach. The *sublime* is an affecting of the mind with a sense of majesty or awe. *Reflection*, in contrast, is the process of serious thought.

Each of these related yet different phenomena used to describe viewer effect of *Decasia* also describe a virtual space. Each suspends, slows, or displaces time relating to duration (*la durée*). Bergson argued that duration conjoins memory and that our past experiences are always available to us and affect any present moment.[78] Onto these moments, we layer other memories. Thus, the present is continually touched by the past, whether we recall it or not.

Putting this in context of self as a maker/subject: I occupy a state of mind through devising, creating, and reflecting upon my creative responses to the personal past. What prompts these responses is a synthesising of two spaces: the space of a snapshot, and the studio site. This creates overlap and fusion between my making space and the objects in it, and my inner world.

This synthesis provides the means for me to make new photographs that *behave* like the virtual spatial terms used to describe *Decasia*: hypnotic, a lost dream, a sublime vista, and hallucinatory. Consequently, the resultant photograph becomes an evolving presence.

[74] Henri Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002), 173.
[75] "Hallucination," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed January 20, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hallucination.
[76] "Hypnosis," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed January 20, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hypnosis.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 73.

In chapter one I developed a methodology based on reworking images. But 'reworking' too is a state of mind, which recreates selves in a meaningful way. Through reworking, physical materials become part of my inner creative 'theatre' whilst remaining objects in the outside world.

This is indicative of art historian Barbara Maria Stafford's description of the state of mind she sees as vital to the process of perceiving and experiencing an artwork, specifically in conjunction with its material affects.[79] This state involves intangible processes of "internalization" and of "conscious and non-conscious processing".[80] These, Stafford argues, contribute to one of art's functions: that of "making us aware of our sense perceptions and also aware of ourselves as agents as we direct our attention to the task of combining diverse elements into meaningful synthesis."[81]

In my studio, "meaningful synthesis" also occurs in distinguishing my selves as different mediators in the making process, which come together when I finish the work. My selves then become disassembled and detached in readiness for the work to live and function in a space of its own.

Bill Morrison, though not the subject of *Decasia*, adopts a similar process. He collapses and dissolves images of the past-present. Through his slow, labour-intensive interaction, these images join his archive and memory bank.[82] Although not personal to the viewer, these images draw us in because we sympathise with Morrison's feelings about them. He presents these feelings in the film as emotional cues such as desire, fragility, failure, and loss. These common threads of existence, things we think about, yearn for or experience, implicate our 'selves'. They elicit strong affect through conscious and unconscious reactions and responses. This winning of sympathy also is evident in *Camera Lucida* and *Almost*.

Association is therefore an essential tool for progressing my studio practice. 'Association' could help to close the gap between the self and the viewer, allowing the viewer to relate to my internalised experience.

[79] Alfonsina Scarinzi, *Aesthestics and the Embodied Mind: Beyond Art Theory and the Cartesian Mind-Body Dichotomy* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2015), 325.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Andre Habib, "Matter and Memory: A Conversation with Bill Morrison," *Offscreen* 8 no. 11 (2004), accessed February 14, 2017, http://offscreen.com/view/morrison2.

One relevant way in which Barthes, Archard, and Morrison create association through feeling is by putting into conversation two irreconcilable elements. These elements are the archive versus the ephemeral. Their works highlight the permeability of imagery, memory, and the self in light of the past, present, and future. This observation moved me to experiment with making self-defining memories more material while also revealing that the material used for reworking images is ephemeral.[83] It ratified the need for my work to contain a sensory dimension stirring reflection of other events, other selves, and other snapshots.

Summary

Letting chronesthesia and recollection recovery be virtual companions in the studio honed the scope of my research. Part of their success is owed to their similarity with practice-based research. They are dependent on the subjective needs and preferences of the self. As Shirley Read and Mike Simmons explicate in *Photographers and Research*:

> The term research represents a course of action that can lead to outcomes that are not fixed or predictable. Research can emerge through everyday encounters and can be triggered by self-inquiry and the personal nature of experience.[84]

Camera Lucida, Almost, and *Decasia* emphasise that the mental images we conjure from past experiences expand, contract, and multiply what we think and feel now. This changes as our lives do, and as those images reflect on and interact with others. Thus, as an artist drawing inspiration from my past, I may forever dwell in an intermediary space in my studio. Philosopher Keith Ansell-Pearson highlights this in his writings on Bergson: "We shift between virtual and actual states all of the time, never completely virtual or completely actual."[85]

This shifting of states made me see that 'virtual' is too narrow a descriptor of the new space linking autobiographical memory with photographs referred to so far within this research. 'Virtual space' does not allow for what I distinguished in this chapter. That is, to use photography to manipulate self-defining memories it is necessary to amalgamate two spaces that are at once actual and virtual: the snapshot and the artist studio. 'Transitional', 'intermediary', and 'suspensory' are not suitable descriptors either. They imply that the space I encounter through interacting with memories and snapshots is something I pass through, or a holding pattern, which suggests a period of little or no progress or change.

[83] Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, *Feeling Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 289.
[84] Shirley Read and Mike Simmons, introduction to *Photographers and Research: The Role of Research in Contemporary Photographic Practice* (New York, NY: Focal Press, 2017), xi.
[85] Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 68.

Returning to Barbara Bolt's theory that one encounters artistic realisation through language, I looked to the structure of language to find a suitable replacement for 'virtual' space. I needed a word that embodied thinking and doing, consciously and intuitively. I chose 'prepositional'.

A preposition indicates a location or a space, either in the physical world (e.g. the cat is *on* the sofa) or in the imagination (e.g. the picture is *in* my mind).[86] A preposition also can show location in time (e.g. *at midnight*). Thus, prepositions inform our understanding of objects and object-associations. Most prepositions are subjective in their interpretation, because on their own they lack specificity of meaning or are difficult to define. The way you consider 'on', 'above', 'near', or 'by' will likely differ to my understanding. For this reason, prepositions need to be in a relationship with another word, or several words, to make sense. But even putting them in context to judge the relatedness of things, prepositions still leave room for free association.

These defining characteristics make 'prepositional' suited to describing the type of space identified in this research. 'Prepositional' indicates a relationship *between* locations, such my studio, my mind, my past/present; and between objects such as snapshots. From these I create links, which become the scaffold for new work.

Prepositional space is what I create and inhabit when I use my snapshots as tools for mental time travel and recollection recovery, or when mental time travel and recollection recovery refer me back to a snapshot. I then invest the memories and other non-material discoveries I harvest from these activities into my processes for reworking images.

Prepositional space is more than memory or imagination alone. It is the slippage between recall and creative practice. Prepositional space is one in which meditation and projection of self-as-subject and self-as-artist occurs. I create and inhabit it when I dig into the layers of autobiographical memory and thread imagination through their surfaces, and when the new mental materials that result emphasise the visual or tangible ones. It is a space of inquest, inspiration, and transformation.

In chapter three, I continue to reflect on the relationship between reworking images and how I negotiate and understand prepositional space.

[86] "Prepositions," Oxford Dictionaries, accessed August 21, 2016, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/prepositions.

CHAPTER 3: RECONTEXTUALISATION and NEW WORK

Chapter Introduction

Contextualising my foundation work revealed how chronesthesia and recollection recovery guide creative practice. Critical assessment of *Camera Lucida, Almost,* and *Decasia* helped to shape thinking about how photographs incite a virtual space linked to autobiographical memory. This space is physical and mental, and it is through material and sensory encounter of the past/present that I apprehend this space to rework images and create art in my studio. I call this prepositional space.

In this chapter I describe organic, subversive ways of manipulating the past in the present. I refer to *Slow Companions*, a series of images made using the chlorophyll process, and explain how chlorophyll printing led to image-making using various techniques. These culminate in a substantive limited-edition artist book, *Here is Where We Meet*.

I also re-contextualise my practice by examining the work of photographers Binh Danh (*Immortality: The Remnants of the Vietnam and American War*), Alice Cazenave (*Breathe*), Hippolyte Bayard (*Windmills, Montmartre* and *Stains and Traces*), and Smith Eliot (*Falling Leaves*).

Chlorophyll Printing

As with the work described in chapter one, I use snapshots and self-defining memories as cues for reworking images. I also return to my own archives of making, and begin researching photographic processes used by others to communicate ideas about memory.

Most historic and alternative processes involve hand-making photographs without silver in the emulsion. The artist's vision and the materials used are key components. Examples include cyanotype printing, platinum printing, and Van Dyke brown printing.

I explored work of botanical photographers who drew from scientific and aesthetic sources than the personal. Their work often portrayed the distinctive form, structure, and surface texture of plants.[87] I wondered if a similar approach would allow me to describe self-defining memories and feelings associated with them.

[87] *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, ed. John Hannavy (New York, NY: Routledge: 2007), 194-195.

Botanical photographers used various alternative processes to make work. One example is anthotype printing, invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842.[88] This process involves crushing light-sensitive plants into an emulsion. It is then applied to watercolour paper, dried, and used as the base for making a photogram. From this process came chlorophyll printing, in which sunlight bleaches images onto the surface of plant material.

Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey were among the first artists to establish a contemporary definition of chlorophyll printing. In the early 1990s, they cast images onto grass using a projector and a negative.[89] In 2002, Binh Danh expanded this definition by printing positives of selected images onto transparency film.[90] He placed a fresh leaf on top of the film, sandwiched between two sheets of glass and laid it in direct sunlight. The 'baking process' takes a few hours or days. During this time, photosynthesis prints the image from the transparency onto the leaf's surface. As a natural process the sun's bleaching power continues to manipulate the leaf post-exposure. A leaf print will not disappear but, like memory, it will recede.

Two elements of Danh's practice relate to my own. The first is his recollecting the personal past to inform practice. This enabled Danh to illustrate his connection to his Vietnamese heritage. In *Immortality: The Remnants of the Vietnam and American War* the transparencies derive from appropriated images of the Vietnam War.

In pieces such as *Shock & Awe,* we see a squadron of military planes in V-formation, which appear to be dropping bombs [figure 36]. The fading and frailty of the dried jungle leaf gives the viewer a feeling of hovering between the real versus the imagined. But the content is more than a representation of an event. It becomes a lingering impression because it mimics an image the viewer may have seen elsewhere, or one like it, in a book or newspaper. How we react to Danh's images depends on our experience of similar images, and also how we interpret the appropriated photograph interacting with the leaf's surface.

[88] Ibid., 859.
[89] Martin Kemp, "Science in Culture," *Nature* 403 (2000): 364.
[90] Robert Hirsch, *Exploring Color Photography: From Film to Pixels* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 20.

Fig. 36. Binh Danh, *Shock & Awe* (2008) from the series *Immortality: The Remnants of the Vietnam and American War*

Danh also uses autobiographical memories of the war shared with him by his parents to inform the work. He layers two types of memory: autobiographical and collective.[91] Collective memory becomes part of Danh's framework for locating, understanding, and contextualising his own memories. Layering lets him create new image-objects to discuss loss, transience, and how photography changes his connection to personal history.[92]

Danh's images are an act of reshaping the past-present. Through the chlorophyll process, he transcribes and translates residue. The residue of memories of war, and the residue of his own history and identity. In doing so, Danh takes an active role in shaping his future, as an accumulator of autobiography and as a retainer and distributor of collective experience.

Drifting Souls #4, seen at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, is a pertinent example [figure 37].[93] In it, a line of soldiers weighed down with packs and weapons shuffles toward or away from something, presumably the front lines. The long grass hides their feet. On the far left, one soldier appears wounded. A viewer may imagine others' injuries. They may notice how the landscape merges with the discoloured surface of the leaf. The veins in the leaf make it look like a wind is 'blowing' the soldiers across the land.

[91] Where in this context 'autobiographical' refers to personally experienced events and 'collective' refers to events bestowed to someone by another.
[92] *Binh Danh: In The Eclipse of Angkor*, edited by Jean Holzinger. Roanoke, VA: The Eleanor D. Wilson Museum at Hollins University, 2009), 9-11.
[93] Visit to the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL, September 2016.

Fig. 37. Binh Danh, *Drifting Souls #4* (2005)

The second element of Danh's practice relevant to my own is the ephemerality of the chlorophyll process, which mirrors how memory works. Chlorophyll prints are destructible unless fixed in some way. Danh addresses this challenge by casting his leaves into synthetic resin. They are then locked within protective frames and displayed in low light [figure 38].

Fig. 38. Binh Danh, installation view, *Immortality: The Remnants of the Vietnam and American War* (2012)

In Danh's view: "Nature is the final place where memory lies. I imagined that through my interaction with the landscape I could flush those memories out."[94] Though this viewpoint aligns with my own view of memory, the presentation method Danh chooses for his work is paradoxical. In using resin to make his leaves shelf-stable, Danh obstructs the course of nature and the nature of memory. Resin embalms memory, 'stopping' the image and solidifying history. It flattens personal and collective memories, foregrounded in the images and the khaki colour of the leaves.

In 2015, British photographer Alice Cazenave broadened Danh's method. She invented the Pelargonium process, which involves using lamps to make the exposure onto geranium leaves.[95] Cazenave then removes chlorophyll from the leaf via several chemical washes, which makes the latent photograph visible with a chemical that identifies starch produced in the leaf. But as with chlorophyll printing, the image is ephemeral unless fixed with heat.[96]

Cazenave also embeds her work into resin or acrylic. *Breathe* is from Cazenave's early experiments [figure 39]. Her focus on developing the process means that, in contrast to Danh's work, the content of the images is unimportant. Cazenave explains: "The making is more important than the taking… The next stage will be to tell stories with it."[97]

Fig. 39. Alice Cazenave, *Breathe* (2015)

[94] Adam McCauley, "Vietnam War Images, Photosynthesized," *The New York Times*, May 30, 2012, accessed March 30, 2016, http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/30/reading-the-leaves/.
[95] Sarah Marie Allen, "How Photography is Just Like Photosynthesis," *British Journal of Photography*, September 24, 2015, accessed February 9, 2017, http://www.bjp-online.com/2015/09/alice-cazenave-how-photography-is-just-like-photosynthesis/.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ben Beaumont-Thomas, "Alice Cazenave's best photograph: a portrait on a leaf," *The Guardian*, September 24, 2015, accessed April 10, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/sep/24/alice-cazenave-best-photograph-portrait-on-leaf-photosynthesis.

Subjecting the leaf to a permanent layer of conservancy closes off one of the most compelling and bittersweet traits of memory. This is the irreconcilability of the archive versus the ephemeral. I decided to take two different approaches to 'pressing' viewers into my images. The first approach is to invite physical touch into how my work will be encountered. The second is to use recurrent image-symbols within my snapshots, as a means to tell stories.

Slow Companions

All green leaves contain chlorophyll. Those with high amounts, such as nasturtiums, usually make for quicker, better quality prints. Their role in my self-defining memories during my reminiscence bump made them relevant: I picked nasturtiums when I visited my first boyfriend in hospital.

I made a set of positive transparencies using scans of personal snapshots linked to intimate past relationships. I chose snapshots that contain frequent image-symbols: deer, blossoms, water, meadows, and reeds. As symbols, each represents feelings about the self-defining memories I recall most often. But as I will explain, they also are images that allow a viewer to relate because they are already familiar in some way. Simultaneously, the viewer can intervene in what they recognise.

I omitted snapshots that reveal individual identities. In Guy Archard's *Almost* the inclusion of faces anchored me to his family unit. Images without faces allow for an imagined narrative.

I learned through experimentation. The late spring and early summer sun produced clearer, more intense prints, such as this image of a sand dune on a hot summer's day [figure 40, left). Overcast autumnal days resulted in softer mid-tones, shown in this close-up image of a cluster of apple blossoms [figure 41, right].

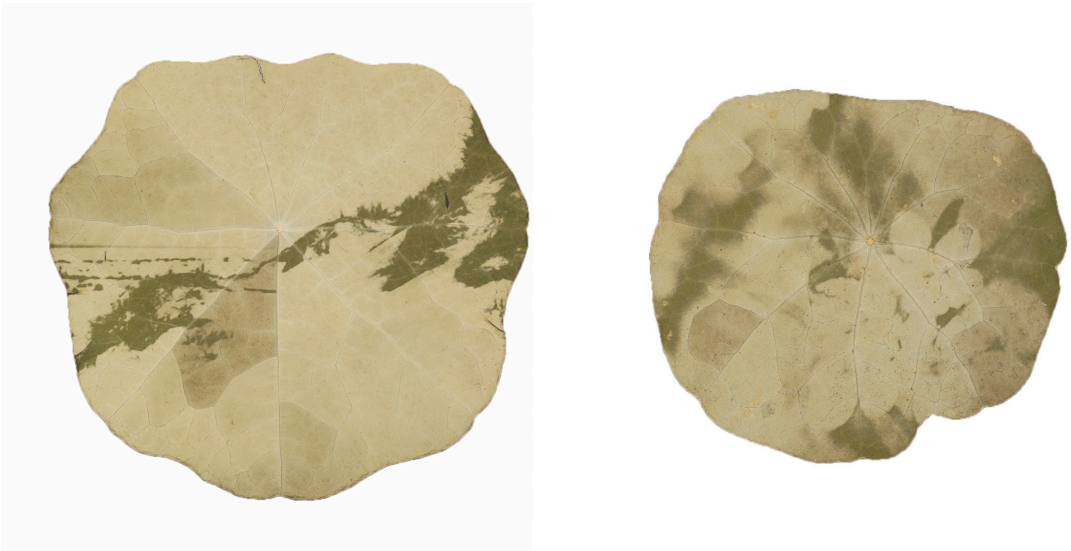

Fig. 40. *Dunes* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Fig. 41. *Blossoms* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

With underexposures, the dullness creates a solemn ambience, as with this image of rolling waves [figure 42]. In it, the cloudy half-light makes the seafoam and the leaf's veins more uniform. The subject matter and the container inform each other through interweaving.

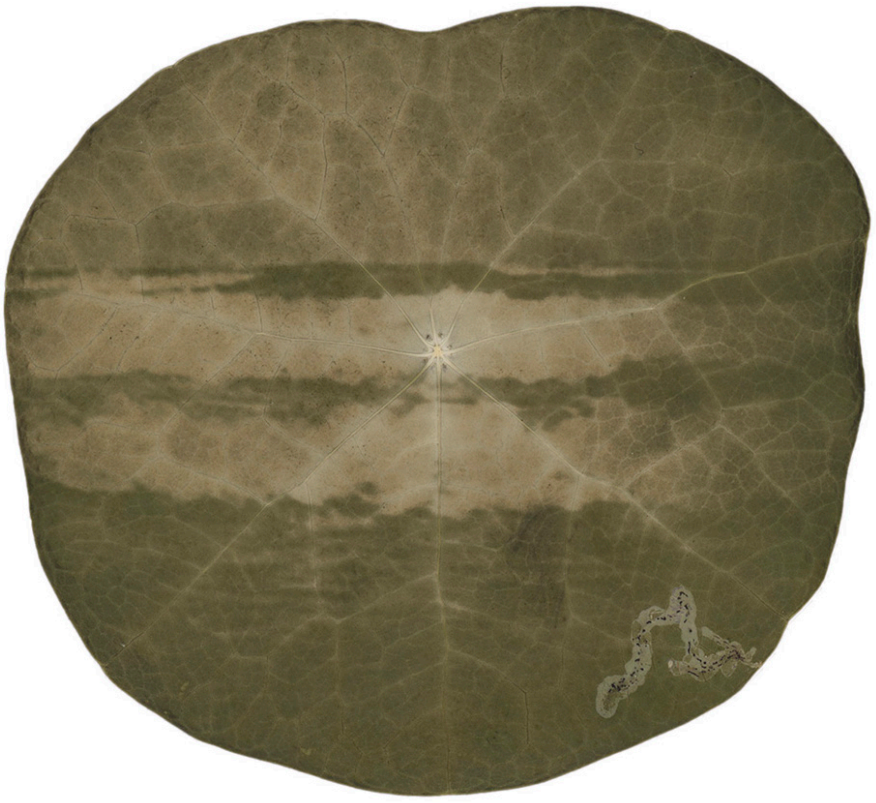

Fig. 42. *Waves* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Dunes, water, and waves feature as subject matter. Besides their autobiographical relevance, the beach is a place we often go when we need time or space to think and 'be'. We associate it with a sense of calm. It also is a place where, in fixating our vision on the view, we may experience a daydream-like trance.

It is this type of virtual 'transportation' I sought from my snapshots and how I printed them onto the leaves. Relocating a viewer into a space between what they see, what they recall, and what they imagine. I sought to give the viewer a cognitive 'break' from reality while also being 'in' it.

This required studying the architecture of each leaf. For example, I could make it look like a stone thrown in the water [figure 43]. As with my series *Temporarily Yours*, the silhouette helps the viewer to mentally 'place' themselves into the scene.

Fig. 43. *Drift* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Sometimes light bleached certain sections of leaf while altering natural pigments in others. Noticing these inconsistencies encouraged me to use blemished leaves [figure 44]. In *Shore*, ruination challenges the subject matter. It makes it difficult to know whether a defect in the leaf is meaningful, residual, or ancillary. As is the case with *Decasia*, ruination becomes the determinant of a new set of perceptions for a viewer.

Fig. 44. *Shore I* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Another example is *Meadow* [figure 45]. Here, the print looks like something recalled and reworked as a projection of self in subjective time, yet unstable. The image of a distant landscape vista is accessible through the process of reproduction. But the leaf print, as an object, displaces the qualities and aura of my original experience. This new proximity brings with it an absence of the memories themselves.

Fig. 45. *Meadow* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

During this extended period of making I developed an unexpected relationship to my leaf prints. They started to become as precious as my snapshots. The mental state I entered became an important insight. I was experiencing loss through an affective relationship with the leaves as delicate objects rather than as containers of personal memories.

The chlorophyll prints reflect an exploration of the intangibility of memory counter to the snapshot. This aligns them with *Excavations*. Both series involve a paring back or a stripping away of visual information, balanced with visual clues.

For example, in *Excavation #4* there are forms that look like small plants [figure 46, left]. In *Glistens*, there are reeds and water ripples [figure 47, right].

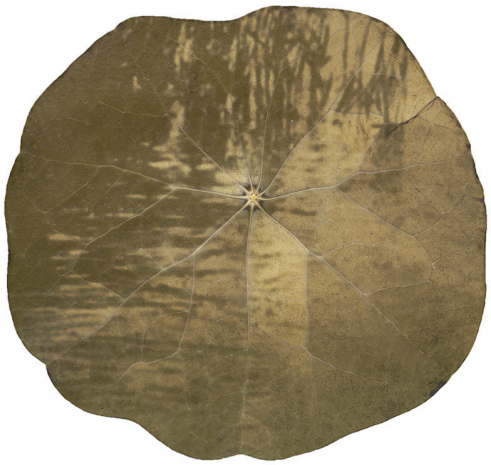

Fig. 46. *Excavations #4* from the series *Excavations* (2015)
Fig. 47. *Glistens* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

But the two series differ. In *Excavations*, manual manipulation is evident by the trace of my hand. With the leaf prints, I am no longer working on the source material. My encounter with the leaf is more elusive. The subject matter also is more recognisable in the chlorophyll prints without being too directive. A viewer can make associations because the subject matter maintains a link to reality.

Despite copious note-taking, making leaf prints remained a process of trial and error. I had to experiment up to 50 times and wait for nature to produce five 'right' prints. I defined 'right' as where two important aspects of the work co-merged. First, that the subject matter was simple, accessible, and recognisable. And, that it allowed a viewer to drift between reality and unconsciousness. Second, that the 'right' type and the 'right' quantity of flaws were clear.

The mastery came in recognising when 'accidental rightness' met 'informed rightness'. This extended the approach I took with *Excavations*, in which the sanded image needed to look right and feel right. With my leaf prints, 'rightness' also meant creating a meaningful relationship between the leaf and the subject it held.

One flaw led to a new idea. I learned to clean my transparencies each day, as nasturtiums secrete oil when pressed. Noticing these 'impressions', I began rephotographing the used transparencies using a flatbed scanner and then restored the colour digitally [figure 48].

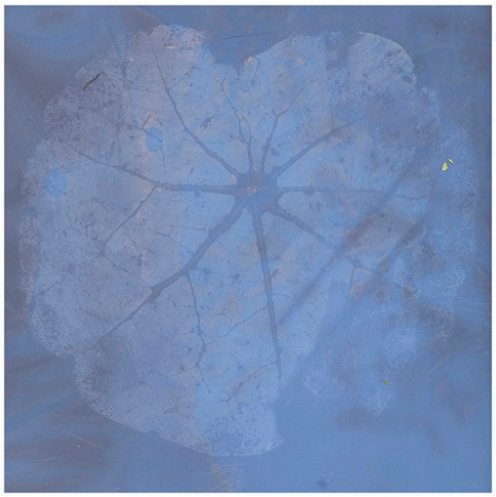

Fig. 48. Untitled work-in-progress (2016)

The resultant images offer a further lack of representation. For example, *Profile* shows the negative outline of branches from a dead tree [figure 49]. The tree appears to hover and glimmer above the nasturtium impression in the background. By turning the image counter-clockwise 90 degrees, I could 'turn' the tree into what might be read as the side profile of a face. This reworking isolates a fragment of a past scene and manipulates its context. A duality for the viewer emerges: what the image is *of* versus what one *sees*.

Fig. 49. *Profile* (2016)

Old dead trees are a recurrent subject in my snapshots because of where I grew up. In relation to my research, they also are significant because they show absence through the loss of their foliage, colour, and youth. These are losses associated with autobiographical memory and its relationship to duration. Things grow. We age. We remember and we forget.

The clarity of the foreground against the soft haze of the background further emphasises absence. It highlights the decline in readable information between the two planes. The illusory, dreamlike environment is formed through colour, light, shape, and shadow. These, together with semi-abstract subject matter, help to convey a looser feeling or sensation for the viewer.

New questions arose from this process. What will happen if the images started to 'lose' their details to the impressions? How might this interaction create association for the viewer? This prompted me to make multiple exposures of the impressed transparencies.

The approach produced varied results owing to differences in the nasturtium leaves. For example, in *Surge* [figure 50, top] the image of a young deer merges more completely with the nasturtium impression than the branches do in *Profile*. Though the body, tail, and legs of the deer are visible, the 'starburst' effect of the leaf's veins veils its head. This adds drama and interest to the simple background.

I felt uncertain about this sense of drama. So, I re-used the transparency and made a second multiple exposure, *Dappled* [figure 51, bottom]. This time, it produced a different optical effect. The deer and the impression are more indistinct. They fold into one another in a way that tricks the eye into perceiving depth. I became enticed by the illusion of finding something else hidden within the print. I tried to look 'through' and 'beyond' this sandwiching of the subject with the leaf's residue.

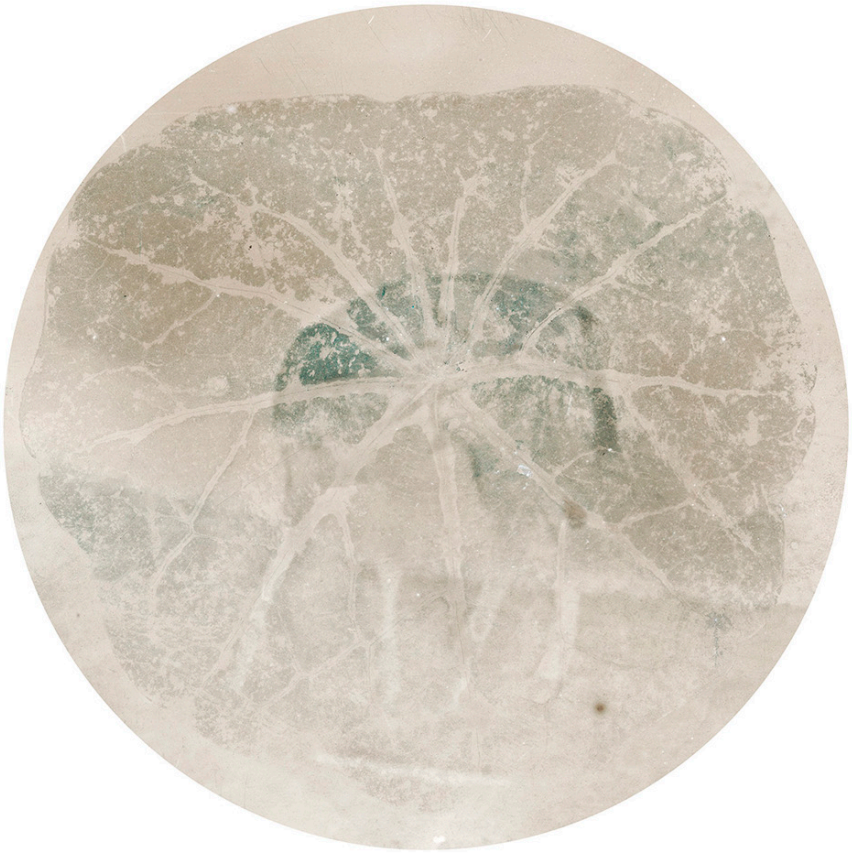

Fig. 50. *Surge* (2016)

Fig. 51. *Dappled* (2016)

The latter result requires a different type of looking. The image calls into question the amount of visual information we need to process a picture. With *Dappled*, a viewer needs to adopt a more active process. It involves scanning the image, fixing on an area of interest and then integrating this perception with what they already know. By scrutinising the work, this introduces an element of Bergson's *la durée* and awareness into the process of reading.[98]

The images become more than layers of images or pleasant-looking formal visual studies. Rather, they are semi-abstractions of past events, transformed into a perceptual theory. The viewer needs memory and imagination to activate meaning.

Watching deer is a feature of several important memories I recall often. I associate the deer's features and delicate movements with a particular regard for space. My father would remind me to move slowly and quietly to hide our approach so we could watch them graze in the evening. He reiterated the importance of 'giving them space' to behave naturally. We looked for signs of their presence. My father also taught me how to find deer beds. Thus, I wanted the work to be symbolic of these features of memory recall: looking, noticing space, searching for signs.

All this knowledge proved helpful for deciding which images to edit out. I based my decisions on their spatial qualities. I asked: How is subject matter displaced by the impression or through layering? How is depth or volume implied? What influence do these have on how a viewer reads the work and locates themselves within it?

I selected those where the content and the space of the leaf effortlessly combine to create a new visual and spatial relationship. For example, in *Coast*, the impression becomes a cloud formation above the shoreline [figure 52]. The relationship between the two elements is complementary. No element rises above its 'partner'.

[98] *la durée* [in English: duration] is used by Henri Bergson in *Memory and Matter* to describe how he thought of time and its relationship to the past and the present. Summarised as, "…the preservation or prolongation of the past and entailing the co-existence of past and present," Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory," 62.

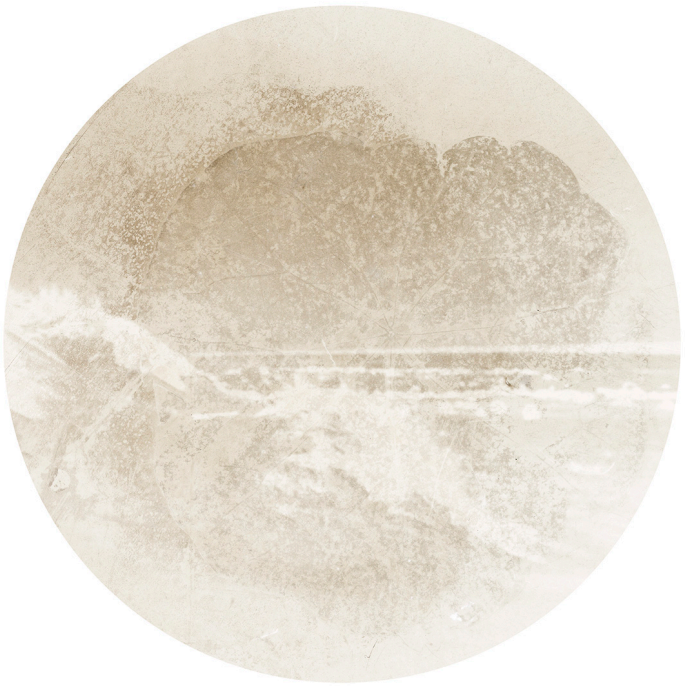

Fig. 52. *Coast* (2016)

A similar space is evident in Hippolyte Bayard's *Windmills, Montmartre* [figure 53]. This is a direct-positive, made on a sheet of writing paper.[99] The image looks of-the-world and yet otherworldly, in part owing to the process used. A unique positive cannot be reproduced, and Bayard's use of plain paper means the image further lacks clarity and detail. And, like chlorophyll prints, early salted paper prints like Bayard's have a heightened sensitivity to light because they are unfixed.

Fig. 53. Hippolyte Bayard, *Windmills, Montmartre* (1839)

[99] Personal visit to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, October 2016.

The image replicates the experience of existing between two states through its formal qualities. The chemical damage and the contrasting edges of the print amplify this. Upon seeing this work exhibited in Paris in 1839 and then recounting his experience 12 years later, critic Francis Wey had a similar reaction. He made an analogy with dreams:

> They resembled nothing I had ever seen… One contemplates these direct positives as if through a fine curtain of mist. Very finished and accomplished, they unite the impression of reality with the fantasy of dreams: light grazes and shadows caress them.[100]

Another point of relevance between my work and Bayard's is his experimentation *becoming* subject matter. This is evident in the collection of his experiments published in *Taches & Traces* (2015). The dense opacity of initial tests merges with the faintness of the more recent direct positives [figure 54].[101] This displaces the aspect of duration in the work akin to Archard's *Almost*.

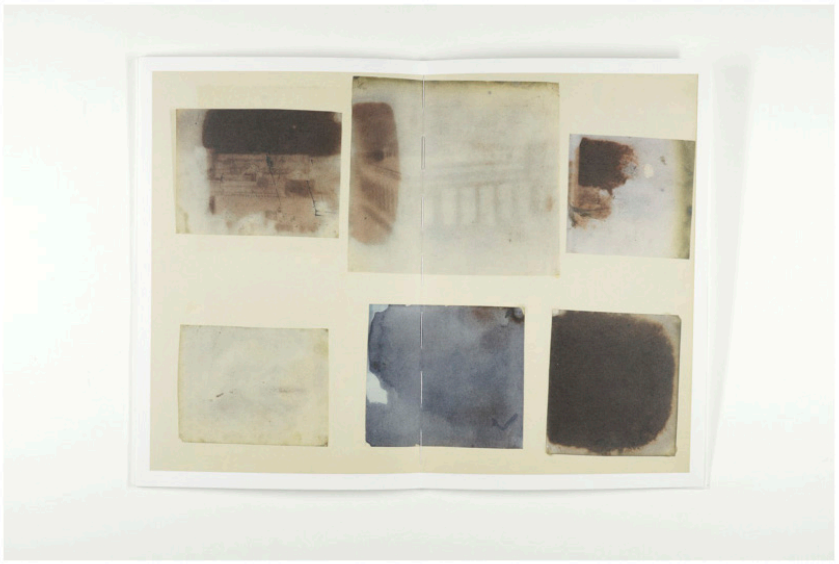

Fig. 54. Hippolyte Bayard, page spread from *Taches & Traces* (2015)

As with the deteriorating film stock in *Decasia*, many of Bayard's works in the book are so blurred it is impossible to discern a single subject. Rather, Bayard's quest to locate something new, through a repetitive process of 'learning photography', *is* the subject. The works are subjects and objects about photography as much as they are records and memories of Bayard's 'searching'.

This reflection on Bayard's work further influenced my final selection of chlorophyll prints. I expand on this shortly. The nasturtium impressions were set aside for use later.

[100] Maria Morris Hambourg, Pierre Apraxine, Malcolm Daniel, Jeff L. Rosenheim, and Virginia Heckert, *The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century: Selections from the Gilman Paper Company Collection* (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 281.
[101] Luce Lebart, *Taches & Traces, Premiers essais photosensibles d'Hippolyte Bayard*, trans Shannon de Vivies (Paris, France: Societe Francaise de Photographie and Diaphane Editions, 2015), unpaginated.

Presentation and Display

I looked to contemporary fine art and botanical preservation for examples of how to present and display the leaf prints. In almost all cases, hands-on contact is denied.

Smith Eliot's book *Falling Leaves* incorporates audience interactivity [figure 55]. It presents as a box containing 21 original prints on hand-pigmented watercolour paper. Eliot made the colours by applying crushed stones to the final pieces.[102] The original photographs depict trees and leaves taken by Eliot on walks around her home. Into the box, she combines found vernacular imagery. In Eliot's words, together these create "a small treasure box of real and imagined memories".[103]

Eliot gives the box the same hands-on attention and respect as the prints. She puts the container (outside) and contained (inside) into conversation. There is material and sensory substance to both parts of the work. It is for the hand. The viewer can feel its surfaces and put Eliot's past in motion. Each image draws our attention but also how we hold it, physically and then in memory.

Fig. 55. Smith Eliot, *Falling Leaves* (2013)

[102] Melanie McWhorter, "Artist Books: Falling Leaves and (Re) Cycle of Life," photo-eye blog, September 11, 2015, accessed April 22, 2016, http://blog.photoeye.com/2015/09/artist-books-falling-leaves-and-re.html.
[103] Ibid.

I wanted the viewer to encounter and interact with the leaf prints without the restrictions of resin or glass, to see them as 'containers' of self-defining memories. I also wanted to reconstruct more of my autobiography and place it into the work. This impelled me to unbind an early 20th century family album I had inherited. The album suffered severe sunlight and water damage before someone removed all the pictures. This left an array of ghosted shapes and overlays [figure 56].

Fig. 56. Undated vintage family album, author's private collection

I adhered the leaf prints to these pages with fine tape so they hover on the surface. I then float-mounted and recessed each page into a frame without glass. This presentation method means that to look at a leaf print is to expose it not only to study but also to its demise. Light, air, and time encounter and interact with the work. A viewer can touch a leaf if desired, knowing their actions could fracture it.

Mounted onto the displaced album pages, and installed in pairs, the works maintain their album roots. This approach presses old versus new and object versus subject into service together.

For example, in *Wren*, the album page is in landscape mode [figures 57 and 58]. This page orientation is a visual cue for how a viewer should consider the work. In the background is the visible imprint of where the original photograph once lived. This shadow becomes the 'frame' for the chlorophyll print, a small male blue wren. The leaf's off-centre position suggests the family album while giving importance to the remaining space.

Fig. 57. *Wren* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Fig. 58. *Wren* (detail) from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

During the mounting process, single leaves sometimes lacked visual or conceptual impact. It reminded me of assessing the rectangular versus circular frame for *Temporarily Yours*. In contrast, when placing two or more leaves apart, near, or on top of one another on the page, a new relationship emerged. Space between leaves spoke to distance or estrangement. Layered leaves, sometimes from the same digital positive, indicated reunion or reconciliation.

For example, in *Cove, Tail* two nasturtiums overlap a little [figure 59]. The leaves are almost the same size, shape, and tone, which implies equivalence. The upper image of the cove, snapped from further away, makes it more unclear and indistinct. The sun's effect on the leaf is more varied. There are lighter and darker patches interacting with the content. The leaf's veins also become subject matter. For example, the centre vein becomes the horizon. The imprint of the stem becomes a burst of light, like a lighthouse. In contrast, the lower image of the mare's tail is closer and clearer. There is a sense of movement owing to the crop of the original snapshot.

The positioning of *Tail* calls to mind the implications of 'holding' memories through imagery. This leaf appears 'held' by the ghosts of two rectangular shapes. A holding also is suggested by the leaf seeming to 'escape' out of the background shadow toward the edge of the page.

Layering, cropping, and positioning thus become process-based methods of mining and revealing ideas I have with the viewer about re-experiencing the 'lost' past. For me, these approaches to creating work make self-defining memories, expressed through the subject matter printed onto the leaves, more provocative, owing to their ability to infer, strengthen, or complicate relationships.

Fig. 59. *Cove, Tail* (detail) from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Repetition produces a similar result. In *Three Deer*, each print derives from the same snapshot [figures 60 and 61]. But each nasturtium differs in type, shape, and quality. Though a viewer can recognise each as the same deer, the deer's relationship with each leaf influences one's reading.

Fig. 60. *Three Deer* from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

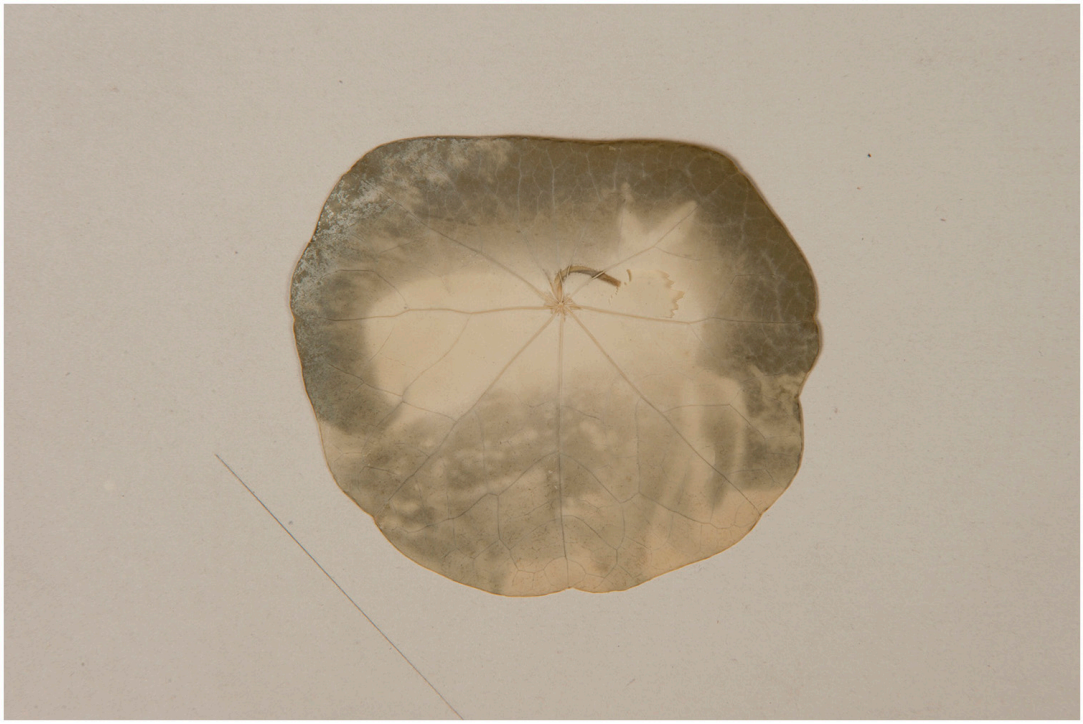

Fig. 61. *Three Deer* (detail) from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Further influencing the work are misshapen rectangles in the centre of the page spread [figure 62]. These prompt the viewer to consider how many 'pasts' they are engaging with.

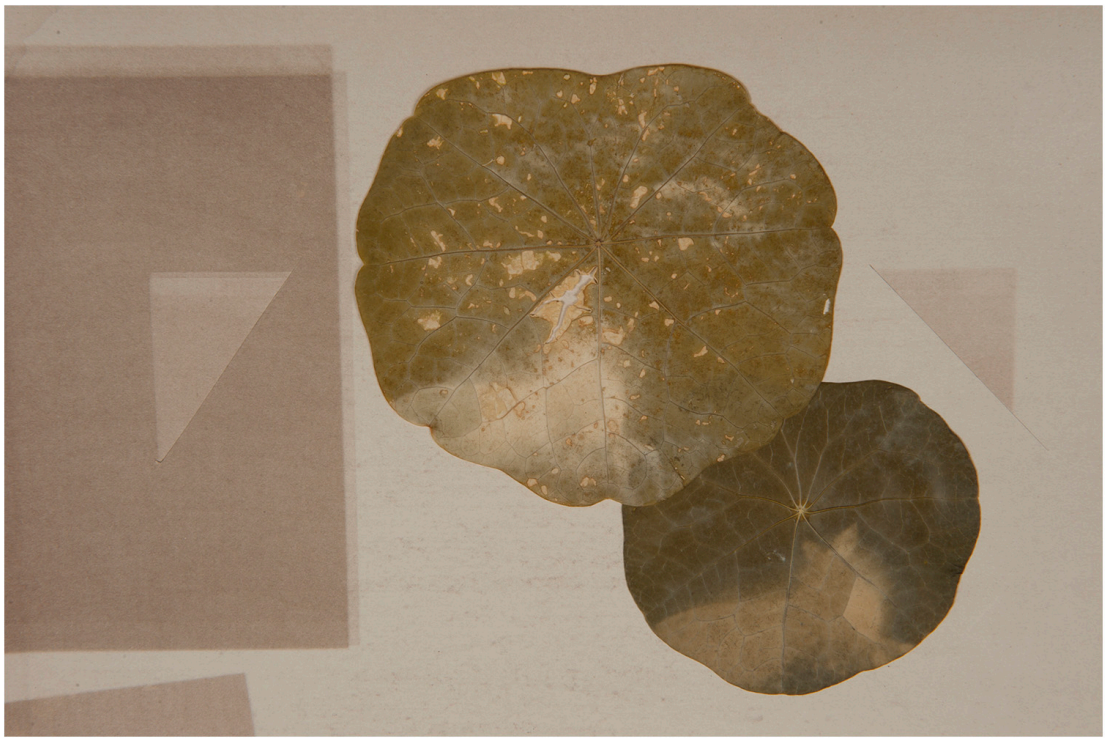

Fig. 62. *Three Deer* (detail) from the series *Slow Companions* (2016-2017)

Though I used displacement, imperfections, and recurrence to influence how a viewer reads the work, simplicity is key. In composing images with fewer elements, the subject looks more solitary but also more unique. The muted colour palette emphasises this.

Titles are vital to illuminating a little of my creative intentions. *Slow Companions* as the series title for this work speaks to the slowed-down process of making, remaking, and reflecting. It also refers to mental time travel and recollection recovery as companions in the studio. But a companion is not only something or someone we spend time with. A companion also is one who shares our experiences. For me, this is a viewer, with whom I develop a slow, intangible relationship. This relationship develops through the act of looking and re-looking.

Key Insights: Chronesthesia and Recollection Recovery

The premise was to create new images that make personal memories to some extent tangible through photographic object-hood while demonstrating the material in which memory is embedded is ephemeral, in a way that a viewer may experience a sense of shared nostalgia for the 'lost' past. A secondary proposition was to approximate the experience of chronesthesia and recollection recovery through the work.

Key process-led actions and choice of subject matter shaped how I developed and presented the final works. A viewer can 'see' and 'touch' my past in new photographic form. I was less concerned about a specific memory or segment of my history being immediately manifest in the leaf prints. Rather, I sought to make the subject matter testimonial to generic past experiences. This was a key way of reconciling the space between my 'knowing' and viewer's unfamiliarity.

Though the work is not a direct likeness of me or my past, it is commemorative. Without being aware of my life story, there is no way to fully comprehend the symbolic essence of the work. Yet, each piece offers material and sensory cues, irrespective of whether one is aware of its autobiographical origins.

The natural shapes of the leaves stand out for their relationship to Bergson's concept of recollection recovery in which we adjust and refocus our vision until what we see, or what we *need* to see, comes into view.[104] There is a flickering at their edges. Reworking past experiences using the chlorophyll process makes them more material.

Yet, the leaf prints also create a replica nostalgic effect. Before making them, I had a subjective rose-coloured view of certain memories. That view now also pertains to the past I reworked and recreated through chlorophyll printing.

Framing my leaves without glass means that they are exposed to elements such as humidity and to the potential for human touch. This may increase their 'death-ness'. Likewise, the process of recalling memories increases their mortality. *Slow Companions* incorporates layers of loss that stir me. Though I am restless about the potential for viewers to touch the work, there is vitality in feeling free from the constraints of how we encounter sentimental objects.

[104] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 73.

Through subject matter and the leaf's material and sensory characteristics, I hope the work will invite a viewer to suspend their self: between seeing the images and adjusting their focus to the leaves on which they now live; between needing to look and wanting to touch; between gazing into the shadows and voids infused on the pages and the leaf prints that hover above.

To arrive at this point with the work, I had to create and occupy a new space myself. In this space, mental time travel, recollection recovery, my snapshots, and the medium itself became my converters. They allowed me to 'unfix' enough of myself as a subject so the artist 'in me' is more present. Using my archive of snapshots, I plough the land of my past mentally and use images as sparks. I reconnect with longings, perceptions, recurrent images, or themes originating from the past to then reinterpret their flux and flow.

Slow Companions exemplifies my occupying what I have positioned as prepositional space. I had progressed from my foundation work, ready to continue reworking images.

Recovering and Relearning

During reflection on *Slow Companions* I read *Photogenic Painting*.[105] This publication examines critical relationships in contemporary visual art. I noticed a link between my research and Michel Foucault's questions about creating new images through manipulation and change:

> How can we recover the games of the past? How can we relearn, not just to decipher or to appropriate the images imposed on us, but to create new images of every kind? Not just other films or better photographs, not simply to rediscover the figurative in painting, but to put images into circulation, to convey them, disguise them, deform them, heat them red hot, freeze them, multiply them. To banish the boredom of writing, to suspend the privileges of the signifier, give notice to the formalism of the non-image, to unfreeze content, and to play, scientifically and pleasurably, in, with and against the powers of the image.[106]

Foucault's words drove consideration for recovering the past and relearning through practice. In *Slow Companions*, I created images prompting the viewer to meditate on their material and sensory qualities, as well as their own responses. The photographs were more accessible through integrating visual and physical touch. What then could other types of reworking offer a viewer? How could I recover and relearn past and present selves through alternate methods of reworking? What considerations would I need to adopt about subject matter?

[105] Sarah Wilson et al. *Photogenic Painting* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000).
[106] Ibid., 89.

I wanted to continue using personal snapshots. I also wanted to create an artist book. The book format is a physical experience that creates a connection with the work that is individual and personal. For example, I appreciated how *Almost* puts viewers *with* photographs as visual presences, as cues for recall or imagining, and as objects that produce emotion.

Photographs are well suited to artist books because through images in this format we acquire knowledge and share stories. In *Photography Changes Everything*, Merry A. Foresta writes:

> Sometimes the stories are about the subject of the photograph; sometimes about the photographer, or what was going on when the photograph was taken. Sometimes the photograph reminds one of another photograph and another moment.[107]

I found the latter statement of a photograph being capable of reminding us of "another moment" relevant. It aligned with my need to help viewer connectivity. It also aligned with an earlier note about the photograph's indexicality and its ability to be a point of visual and mental departure.

In her discussion of *Camera Lucida*, Liz Wells points out the photograph is at once literal and imaginary.[108] Visual qualities, for instance, influence our response and thus our relationship to images. Certain photographs arrest our attention; others fail to move or 'hold' us.

What I didn't know was what *types* of images, subject matter, or techniques enable 'recovering' and 'relearning' perceptions of certain memories. So, I 'asked' my materials. I thought about the characteristics of snapshots that hold us. What must a photograph of someone else's past have to slow down and engage the viewer?

To do as writer Philip Stokes indicates in relation to viewing others' snapshots:

> And yet in every dreary litany there is an instant…when a window opens onto a scene of fascination that stops the eye and seizes the mind, filling it with questions or simple joy. The anticipation of such instants, and the knowledge that a sensitive owner will have structured the whole viewing around them, has me always ready to plunge off into new forays through family images.[109]

[107] Merry A. Foresta, foreword to *Photography Changes Everything* by Marvin Heiferman (New York, NY: Aperture, 2012), 8-9.
[108] Liz Wells, ed., *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 37-38.
[109] Philip Stokes, "The Family Photograph Album: So Great a Cloud of Witnesses," in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 194.

The culmination of these activities and questions allowed the 'new' to develop in my studio. Barbara Bolt reflects on this evolutionary process in context of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*:

> …the new can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, methods, tools and ideas of practice. It is not just the representation of an already formed idea or is it achieved through conscious attempts to be original.[110]

The new also emerges from acknowledging and learning from the challenges each series of work reveals. In *Excavations* and in *Slow Companions*, removing physical surfaces opens up new ones. What, then, could *adding* surfaces to photographs achieve? How would this influence absence versus presence, for example?

The topic of surfaces turned my attention to the purpose of the subject matter I used. Practical questions emerged. Is there subject matter more suited to having a surface added? To what extent do I need to identify subject matter through adding a surface, or can it be ambiguous? What questions do I want a viewer to ask from the content I choose? And, what other types of subject matter summon up more than what a viewer sees?

I needed to lead myself further out of my snapshots and memories, to develop different ways of thinking and seeing. I also needed to do as Katy Macleod suggests in her text about art and subject matter: practice the "otherness" of my selves:

> By entering one subject-field we gain access to others. The implicit networks of meaningfulness which connect the subject-fields of art underwrite art's ability to take us beyond ourselves, out of our initial horizons of our present historical circumstance into others. The recovery of other logically possible ways of thinking allows us to look at and, hence, to feel differently about an issue.[111]

Subject matter related to self-defining memories remained an essential component of practice. I was still interested in their suggestiveness and psychological effects, but theorised that *through process* I could make new material discoveries. This will establish a more illusory and more affecting space for a viewer. Process will be a device through which fresh content within reworked images might evolve.

[110] Bolt, "Materializing Pedagogies," unpaginated.
[111] Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge, *Thinking Through Art: Reflections on Art as Research* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 23.

Photographic Subversion I: Encaustic

I began adding surfaces while acknowledging what I was revealing, concealing, or generating through content. I placed emphasis on creating transformative relationships, between the 'old' image past and the 'new' image present. Geoffrey Batchen discusses such transformations to photographs (wax, human hair and paint), which,

> … complicates our temporal experience of the photograph, slowing down the act of perception, denying the photograph's transparency to its subject, declaring the photograph to be an artefact in the present rather than a mere record of the past.[112]

Encaustic is a technique using hot beeswax and dammar resin (raw tree sap) as a medium. It is often used in painting and photography to change image surface and density.

I immersed a selection of snapshots into melted encaustic medium. Sometimes the wax cracked during drying or the coating was too thick, but a transformation ensued. It added a cloudy smooth texture and hints of luminescence to the snapshots. In contrast to printing on a leaf, which makes the image more fragile and less clear, encaustic medium makes it more solid. It also obstructs and manipulates one's vision and perception of the image.

In some instances, the cooled encaustic medium created a forced perspective. Photographers use this to create optical illusions; to distort or misrepresent the size, scale, or proportion of an object. The effect manipulated my perception of relationships between subjects *within* each snapshot. It also influenced my reading of the photograph as *object* versus the photograph as *feeling*.

For example, in *Bonfire* we assume the title is accurate [figure 63]. But wax acts as a transformer of content and perception. The new image oscillates between hallucination and fact. The subject of the original snapshot is not a bonfire at all. It is an image of the late-afternoon sun streaming through the forest where my first boyfriend and I shared our first kiss. The memory is special to me, but the snapshot alone has little or no relevance to you without me transforming it.

Thus, wax helps to create a new subject and new feelings. In this case, a smoky, smouldering fire, something we watch, often letting our eyes glaze over while mentally drifting elsewhere. It may incite a space for a viewer to reacquaint themselves with a memory.

[112] Batchen, *Suspending Time*, 120.

Fig. 63. *Bonfire* (2016)

Using encaustic medium is messy, imperfect and unclear. It is an act of intuition and investigation. Like sunshine for chlorophyll printing, the wax took control. Unlike chlorophyll printing, wax is more forgiving and to some extent I could 'undo' or 're-do' what I had done if 'rightness' was absent. 'Rightness' occurred when I could minimise photography's representation qualities, and when I could stress instead its expressive nature. It took place when boundaries between the real and the unreal blurred in such a way that a sense of transience, longing and dislocation was present, when the wax provided a visceral connection to the surface of the print.

Through this 'undoing' and 'redoing', I wondered how to give a viewer a little more information, while still making it susceptible to mental reworking. Through experimentation, I found I did not always need to efface content in full. Rather, I could rework certain *types* of content a little to help guide a viewer through the work. This revised content would then serve to create narrative. For example, when I sanded selective details such as faces, or folded the photograph to remove a person or 'thing' and *then* dipped it in encaustic medium, I loosened enclosed meanings but without making the piece too vague.

At first, I thought adding wax or scratching or folding any snapshot would make it more eye-catching or intriguing. I was wrong. No matter how 'good' a reworked image looked, without the right content, it was meaningless.

For this reason, as with *Slow Companions*, I chose subject matter relating to objects or scenes that influence our perception of the world, or prompt the mind to mentally roam, such as scapes. But the content had to attract attention upfront for that moment of free association to begin.

Through scratching, sanding, folding and then wax-dipping, my hands become the camera. I created new dreamlike places and experiences, based on memories of intimate relationships. A viewer's gaze, rather than directed to an identifiable person or event, starts with a point of reality and then turns to their own interpretation. This is evident in *Sense* [figure 64]. The photograph may evoke autumn, a forest or femininity as a starting point, for example.

Fig. 64. *Sense* (2016)

The methods I adopted, the way I handled and treated snapshots and memories, the practice of practice; each is *as important* as the content and the form. In turning snapshots inside out, re-exposing them, and splitting them like atoms I was doing something *with* and *to* my past-present.

One can argue the work is too craft-like, or a nostalgic reaction, or denotes a fetish for process. To each of these I counter that reworking images shows that photography is both an investigation and a *means* of investigation. I use photography to rework and illustrate historical people and places to which I have an intimate connection. I am also making photographs as a tool for self-observation and self-evaluation. These activities mean that my engendered attachment and investment in the snapshot unfolds. They unleash the potential stored in a snapshot, as an ordinary object, to become a system of transfers and relays for a viewer. This reflects a novel way of revisiting and thus re-experiencing one's past/present through photography (as process) and photographs (as objects) to let others in.

Curtain is an example of this novel way of seeing through process [figure 65]. The original snapshot depicts the place outside my parent's former homestead where the oldest orange trees grew. There was a stone step in front of them. It was there sat in the evenings with my first boyfriend, holding hands, inhaling the citrus scent. Using encaustic medium fused together this 'realistic' but subjective view of the past with my imagination. Layers of wax, scraped and polished, changed the scene into a sheer curtain across a window, looking into the distance. The wax creates texture and colour shifts on the surface of the past, which changes how selves and viewers interact with it now.

Fig. 65. *Curtain* (2016)

The idea that reworking could create new affective spaces became a primary editing criterion for the encaustic work. I chose encaustics that offered a third dimension to the image, a space that was neither the content of the photograph alone nor the photographic object itself. This synthesis of space within the work mirrored how I was working. I was taking autobiographical memories out of the self, enlarging them into the space of the studio, spreading them via encaustic medium over the surface of snapshots, ready for expansion again into the wider world. This discovery was key in the processes I adopted for the next phase of image-making.

Photographic Subversion II: Rose Petal Collages

I considered how to inject a recurrent visual symbol for intimacy within my images. I sought one authentic to my memories but with potential for collective relatability.

For example, in *Decasia*, Morrison uses circular motion as a motif for change. This presents through a variety of images: a whirling dervish, a Ferris wheel, a merry-go-round, and devices for spooling film [figure 66, left]. In *Almost*, the most common visual cue is flora [figure 67, right]. For my work, I identified the rose as one such symbol.

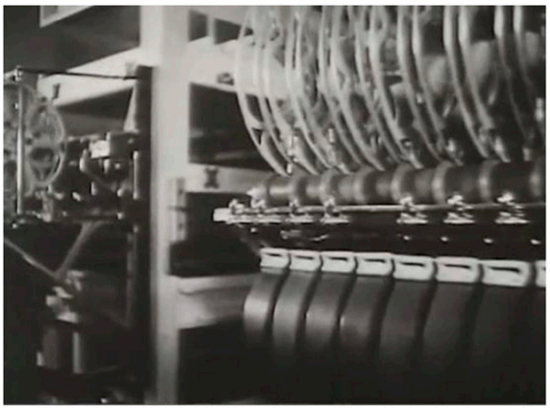

Fig. 66. Bill Morrison, still from *Decasia* (2002)

Fig. 67. Guy Archard, *Almost* (2013)

Plants and flowers carry symbolic meanings. Although there is disparity about the history and truth of these meanings,[113] the rose is synonymous with intimacy and romance. I began collecting and photographing them in my studio. When I collaged petals onto snapshots, including some of the encaustics, they became relevant as layers that renegotiate materials and meanings.[114]

Like encaustic medium, collage brings the flatness of paper to life through engaging with existing images, to which one can assign new context. What I found compelling was when the shapes of the petals became subject matter or read as metaphors for the body. This knowledge guided how I used and placed petals onto snapshots. As when one stares at cloud formations I 'saw' shapes resembling breasts, buttocks or a penis, as in this early test [figure 68]. These fleshy body parts infer a sensual relationship, sexual activity, gender, or desire.

But the more collages I made, the more concerned I was with my repetitive use of square and rectangular frames. I identified this in chapter one. It began to look too fixed and forced.

Fig. 68. *Penis* work-in-progress (2016)

[113] Beverley Seaton, introduction to *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 1.
[114] Elizabeth Siegel. *Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage* (Chicago, IL: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2009), 46.

I began scanning and digitally cutting some of them into circles. In contrast to a square or rectangular frame alone, the circular frame suggests growth from inside the image and out again. This occurs as one's eyes negotiate between the shape, the white space surrounding it, and the image content. The circular shape also correlates with the way in which autobiographical memory lives *with* us rather than within us. Visually they protect and restrict. They also limit the view, reducing the frame of reference, as if the edges of reality have been cropped away leaving only illuminated portals.

In *Buttocks*, formal qualities imply subject matter. Colour, tone, shape, and contours support what the title indicates [figure 69]. The lack of focus removes specificity. Each characteristic helps to reinforce familiarity. The clarity of the rose petal contrasts with the background, drawing one's attention to what the relationship between the two may mean. The white form looks like a petal. Yet, its position and the crop of the circle means it may read as a tissue or a piece of fabric like a towel or a scarf.

Fig. 69. *Buttocks* (2016)

I was enjoying the process of destabilising my snapshots, to the point where the background contained little or no formal content. This prompted me to manipulate the petals to re-create key image-symbols used during chlorophyll printing.

For example, in *Finch*, rose petals are folded and layered to create my own version of this small bird [figure 70, left]. The background is indistinguishable and thus becomes a support structure. There is nothing to state time or place. This too is evident in *Moth* [figure 71, right]. The two semi-sheer overlapping petals, the light tan markings around the edges and the dark spot near the top mimic the look of the cabbage white.

Fig. 70. *Finch* (2016)
Fig. 71. *Moth* (2016)

Photographic Subversion III: Layering and Cutting

I moved on to layering and rearranging snapshots until I was collapsing memories I could 'see' in my mind to create a new scene or feeling. As with *Excavations* and *Slow Companions*, I used memory recall and the formal qualities of the snapshots to inform process.

Through creative treatment, I juxtaposed and transferred physical and visual evidence of my past into a new context. In *Clouds*, the physical qualities of snapshots are evident [figure 72]. The abstract composition provides a rich interpretative field. The imprecision and strangeness of the composition reflects the dream-state. Often in dreams objects or scenes appear larger or smaller than in reality. The layering in *Clouds* and the closeness of the crop emphasises this distortion.

Fig. 72. *Clouds* (2016)

A similar distortion is present in *Seams* [figure 73]. Dark forms of trees merge with the backs of snapshots once stuck to black paper. The lack of factual information gives the image new meaning through aesthetics. No single subject or location is defined. The image functions more like a kaleidoscope of past views.

Fig. 73. *Seams* (2016)

Upon reviewing all the images for the artist book, recurrent aesthetic qualities stood out. Subdued colours, imprecise edges and low-key light, for example. Instead, in editing I looked for scenes that quiet the mind, such as the water in *Wisp* [figure 74]. I also sought content that allowed the image to function as a visual *and* a process.

This realisation was critical. The space of the past/present, as the *content* of these photographs, intersects with the space of the past/present as a *context* for them. They are spaces of imagination and reworking, and of reworking imagination. I immersed these reflections into how I constructed the book.

Fig. 74. *Wisp* (2016)

Artist Book: *Here Is Where We Meet*

I made test prints to assess texture, density, colour and opacity. I chose five sheer papers including handmade uncoated washi and semi-translucent bond paper that hold and refract light in different ways. I asked: How will the images I place onto this paper mediate space and create association between selves and viewers? Does light or the paper itself illuminate or confuse image content?

In book form, each page, and each image, offers a viewer a unique experience [figure 75]. Different aspects of each image are present or absent. For example, in this layout, the different translucencies influenced element interaction. The oscillating planes of focus of each image gave them a radiance that turned looking into contemplative inquiry.

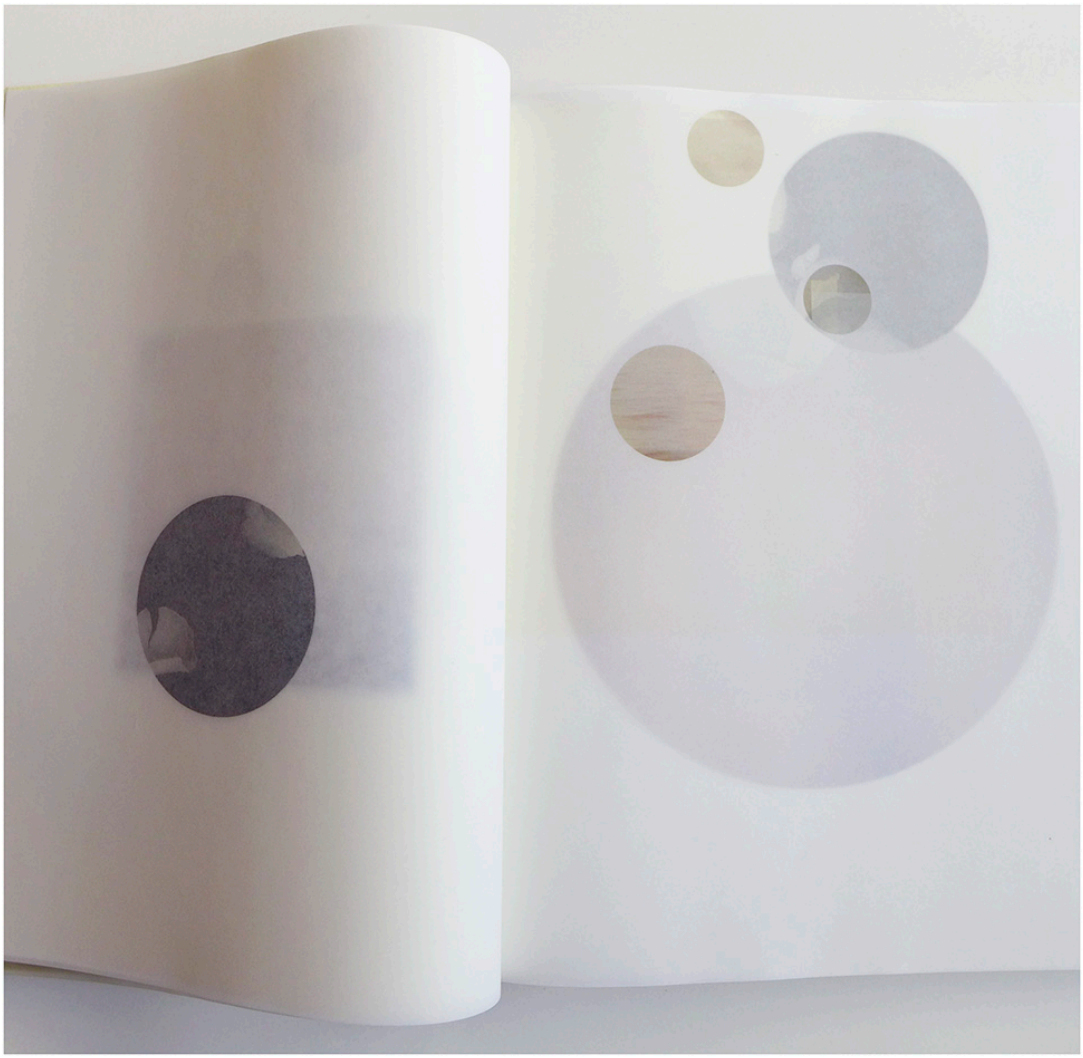

Fig. 75. Page spread from *Here Is Where We Meet* (2016-2017)

I chose 56 images for the book, including several nasturtium impressions. I sought a specific collaboration from the images: they needed to suggest intimacy or loss. I also looked for where the subject matter of the image, its position on the paper, and the paper itself created new meanings and associations.

Sequencing played a major role. For example, on the right of this page spread is a petal collage [figure 76]. On the left, four small circles taken from a snapshot dipped in encaustic medium. The position and layout of the circles across the spread, and in the pages behind, make the subject matter appear to float. It becomes a metaphor for the way our mind organises memory: at different peaks and depths, one over another, always shifting.

Fig. 76. Page spread from *Here Is Where We Meet* (2016-2017)

In this page spread, the minimal content leads the viewer to consider the balance implied by the way the circles interact [figure 77]. Translucency makes them look and feel more unstable. It signifies the relationship between photographic clarity and mental ambiguity – and vice versa.

Fig. 77. Page spreads from *Here Is Where We Meet* (2016-2017)

In the book, presented in a limited edition of four, the lucidity of the different papers encourages the viewer to circumnavigate each photograph as a new experience. They can view it from either side and/or in combination with its partner/s. The viewer can glimpse their fingers and hands as they turn pages. They become placed in an experience of the past/present.

Though the papers chosen for the book are long-lasting, they are prone to puckering and blemishes over time through touch. This weakens the object-hood of the book. Simultaneously, increasing viewer awareness of the book's material qualities may increase its object-hood.

For the binding, I combined oversewing with a delicate, decorative Japanese stab binding [figure 78]. The outer covers are museum-grade acrylic.

Fig. 78. Covers and binding for *Here Is Where We Meet* (2016-2017)

The hardcover sleeves are lined with latex and tied with a ribbon. A window cut into each sleeve's cover holds an original encaustic snapshot [figure 79]. There is no protective coating for the snapshots, which means the reader can feel their reworked surfaces.

Fig. 79. Individual hardcover sleeves *Here Is Where We Meet* (2016-2017)

Upon reflection, I had constructed a new photographic form of material and sensory encounter. The book, titled *Here is Where We Meet*, is part photographic memoir, part anthology, and part journal. It is a work of autobiography and of fiction.

It also is a form of imaginative reminiscence because where past and present 'meet' now is only in my imagination, realised on paper. And, it is where I meet the viewer. The book form helps to slow down a viewer's interaction with the work. The images activate or reactivate something subjective and intangible within the viewer. A memory, a feeling, a sense of recognition through content, subject, colour, shape, light, or some other visual cue.

Conceptualising and realising *Here Is Where We Meet* reveals that memory recollection and snapshots are more than processes or objects that record, duplicate, or fix what happens in our lives. Rather, they are dynamic, creative understanding. When I engage in mental time travel and recollection recovery, and when I refer to snapshots for creative insight, I move through space, I touch them. Reworked, the images return to us in new form. They touch us differently.

It is through this co-mergence I better understand the role of prepositional space in my studio practice. In this space, the sentient presence of my selves touches the ambiguities and echoes of the physical/mental and the past/present. It includes the ways in which I translate changing perceptions about memories and snapshots. I interact with these perceptions, they influence my creative thinking. They permeate practice.

Summary

Synthesising the studio and the snapshot as physical and mental spaces allowed me to transition images beyond flat deaths. Different approaches to reworking highlighted the complexities of the photograph as a container and motivator of memory and recollection.

Paying closer attention to image content and making processes created insights, which informed my research. One insight is the slow pace at which I worked. Slowness allowed me to remove myself from the 'reality' of my studio. It helped me to consider other subjects capable of activating viewer association.

Moments of creative recognition also brought the work together. For example, during the process of selecting the final images for *Here is Where We Meet*, I sometimes found four or five similar ones. Yet, something indefinable would happen in one that made it 'emerge'. This 'something' fluctuated from image to image and so it was a case of *knowing it* through *feeling it*. Where knowing, as Ross Gibson explains, is "a state of being imbued with some illumination, blessed with the ability to see into a mystery, to dispel the ignorance…Knowing is thus an after-effect of understanding."[115]

But I had to be prepared and receptive to do so. This is a second insight. I had to turn a critical eye toward self and practice. I would change my approach based on how I imagined the viewer reacting.

In relearning my 'selves' through practice I extend Paul Carter and Barbara Bolt's discussions about material thinking. It is not just materials that speak and to which I listen. It also is the intricacies of different methods, the unplanned itineraries that the materials take me on *through process*. Together these become a more potent creative force than material thinking alone.

This fluctuation between being 'inside' and 'outside' of process is central to art as research. Ross Gibson clarifies, "The experimenter goes consciously and interrogatively into and then out of an experience, knowing it somewhat by immersion and then somewhat by exertion and reflection."[116]

Slow Companions and *Here Is Where We Meet* show that photographs stimulate interaction with a viewer and become primers for activating the mind's eye more than sight alone. This is because interaction allows us to mentally transition beyond the present moment. I achieved this through embracing the legacy of the print as an introspective, crafted object.

The latter incited deeper consideration of autonomy and the irreplaceable in photography and how they relate to autobiographical memory. I recognised the need to further develop these concepts in chapter four.

[115] Ross Gibson, "The Known World," *TEXT Special Issue*, no. 8 (2010): 4, accessed February 14, 2017, http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue8/Gibson.pdf.
[116] Ibid., 5.

CHAPTER 4: THE IRREPLACEABLE AUTONOMOUS PAST/PRESENT

Chapter Introduction

The irreplaceable and the autonomous are concepts prevalent in memory work and the photographic medium. According to Bergson, the character of memory is both unique *and* autonomous because memories exist 'in' time rather than preserved in the brain.[117] For Tulving memory is a selective processing system with autonomous and semi-autonomous features that are interdependent.[118] In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes relates how the Winter Garden photograph was, for him, a wholly unique presence.[119]

Their viewpoints raised new questions. To what extent could I give photographs the autonomy to be reworked beyond my hands and thus be more separate from me? How to further bypass the photograph-as-evidence? How to extend ideas about misremembering and loss?

Reflecting on preceding works informed my direction in the studio. In *Here Is Where We Meet*, light is essential for revealing new content and forms through overlapping pages. In *Slow Companions*, light made the chlorophyll prints, but can ruin them. In both series light creates a duality: *for* and *against* the image and how the viewer interacts with and responds to it. I hypothesised that light, duration, and loss could help to address the questions raised, thus enhancing and extending previous findings.

In the final bodies of work, I give self-defining memories a transformative, fluctuating existence on the wall. I locate my work in the context of artists Letha Wilson (*Re-Photogram Colorado New York* [*Slash* and *Fold*]) and Phil Chang (*Cache, Active*). I then summarise how the environment of connectedness between snapshots and the studio, which I have called prepositional space, generated new thinking, new work, and a deeper awareness of the maker/subject duality.

[117] Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory," 64.
[118] Endel Tulving, "Precis of *Elements of Episodic Memory*," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 7 (1984): 223-226.
[119] Barthes, "Camera Lucida," 71.

Lumen Printing

Different ways of using light led to further research into camera-less processes. I encountered lumen printing, a form of photogram printing. It involves placing objects onto silver gelatin paper and leaving it in natural light to expose and develop, producing a unique colour print. Chemicals present in certain materials react with the paper in ultraviolet light. Defying the purpose of darkroom paper became a new method of reworking. Uniting two different spaces – the sunlit outdoors versus the safe-lit darkroom – became a new process-based duality.

I made almost 300 lumen prints, using plants specific to self-defining memories. I used new and expired papers, and tested fresh, limp, and dead plant material. I rinsed my prints in hot, cold, and tepid water. As with chlorophyll printing, exposure duration resulted in subtle or substantive changes in how the prints looked, felt, and functioned. I gained a thorough understanding of how materials behaved under different conditions.

Though the lumen prints form an extensive catalogue of testing alone, they lacked conviction. They could not hold together ideas and claims put forward in earlier chapters. First, that self-defining memories can be manipulated through reworking images. Second, that material and sensory encounter can bridge the private space of my intimate relationship history versus the public space of engagement. Third, that I can create and occupy prepositional space through using snapshots as tools for mental time travel and recollection recovery, and vice versa, which leads to new work.

I did make an important discovery relating to irreplaceability and autonomy. Leaving the lumen prints semi-fixed or unfixed means that light and time unmake and remake the work indefinitely. It cannot be restored to its original state. This affects visual perception and how a viewer reads them. Light becomes a powerful conveyer and convertor of space, memory, reaction, and understanding.

Re-encounters

Using this knowledge, I started over with blank sheets of the same transparency film used for chlorophyll printing. I took scans of three images from *Here is Where We Meet* and turned them into digital positives printed onto individual sheets of film.

I experimented with colour and monochrome printing to assess the effect when layering them onto a single sheet of unexposed silver gelatin paper. I placed this 'sandwich' into a frame, hung on the north wall of my studio for one week. Using three digital positives reflects past, present, and future. Layered and pressed together, they then become 'other' or 'another' for the viewer.

Re-encountering 'finished' work felt necessary because of the way in which recollection recovery works. Self-defining memories are repetitive. They focus on unfinished business. My practice also reflects a state of unfinished business. Because my work derives from self-as-subject, it remains in mind. Though the book *Here Is Where We Meet* is complete, to augment this research revisiting images extends its conceptual potential. I can broaden what I re-learned through practice discussed in chapter three.

I found the first test surprising [figure 80]. I had a visceral reaction to the colours and the way in which light reworked the paper and thus the image. The soft pastel tones against the milky blacks of the transparencies produce a striking contrast. The differing levels of visibility between each layer create depth into and back out of the image. Layering gives the circular forms substance.

Though I disregarded content for test purposes, the combination of subject matter in some areas made the image seem more corporal. I saw blood clots and cell neurons, with complicated strands of information linking one circle to the next. In my previous works, I had resisted including identifiable characters as subject matter. This remained important. But this new finding influenced how I chose to make the layered images look or feel of the body. This was achievable in more abstract ways.

Fig. 80. Untitled work-in-progress, 2016

As I watched the test print continue to change and reflected on its formal and aesthetic properties, another new finding surfaced. The work is an imprint of the various types of space that link photography and autobiographical memory, rather than a picture of them. It is an imprint of self-defining memories, and what my artist studio looks like when natural light occupies it. Thus, an imprint of the process of my creating and occupying prepositional space.

For the first time, I noticed evidence of each of these spaces in the work itself. This is because light sensitive materials interact with it, in its environment, to reveal something new and unexpected. The work begins to decode the way a viewer may experience spaces of the past.

Also significant was my response to it as an original artefact. As each week passed, I became more reluctant to see the print underneath. I was curious, but not enough to 'ruin' it. I might undo what the materials had 'given' me: *irreplaceable photographic autonomy*.

So, I continued making, responding to the spaces of memory, my snapshots, and my studio. To build the compositions for each work, I spent time relearning how the content created something new and original when layered. A new subject or feeling, or both.

For example, *Re-encounter #4* comprises two circular monochrome forms and one square colour form [figure 81]. The combination of layers creates a face, looking up. I can 'see' ears, hair, and a neckline. Eyes, a nose, and lips are less clear. It looks more like a cubist or surrealist portrait. But the longer one looks, the more this single face starts to morph into several different faces. The surrounding leaves and berries become decorative embellishment. Though they adorn the face, the portrait is neither masculine nor feminine. As with earlier works, the portrait is representational. There is space to see oneself in it.

Surrounding the main 'face' is the second circular form, which may read as a halo or an extension of thought. Both this and the square form behind carve the main face into sections, creating depth. Rather than a single image, the work functions like a vision in which elements have warped, intersecting in strange new ways. I was using photography to represent memories and, simultaneously, representing how mental time travel and recollection recovery might look as processes.

Fig. 81. *Re-encounter #4* (detail) from the series *Re-encounters* (2016-2017)

In *Re-encounter #10*, the blemished photo-booth portrait rests at the bottom of the frame [figure 82]. The round shape of the figure's head roughly imitates the size of the other seven circles appearing to drift upward. These circles contain little or no decipherable information. This leads a viewer to release more creative potential into how each element relates to one another. Formal aspects such as translucence become more profound. For example, the circles could become signifiers for memories escaping or thoughts 'set free'.

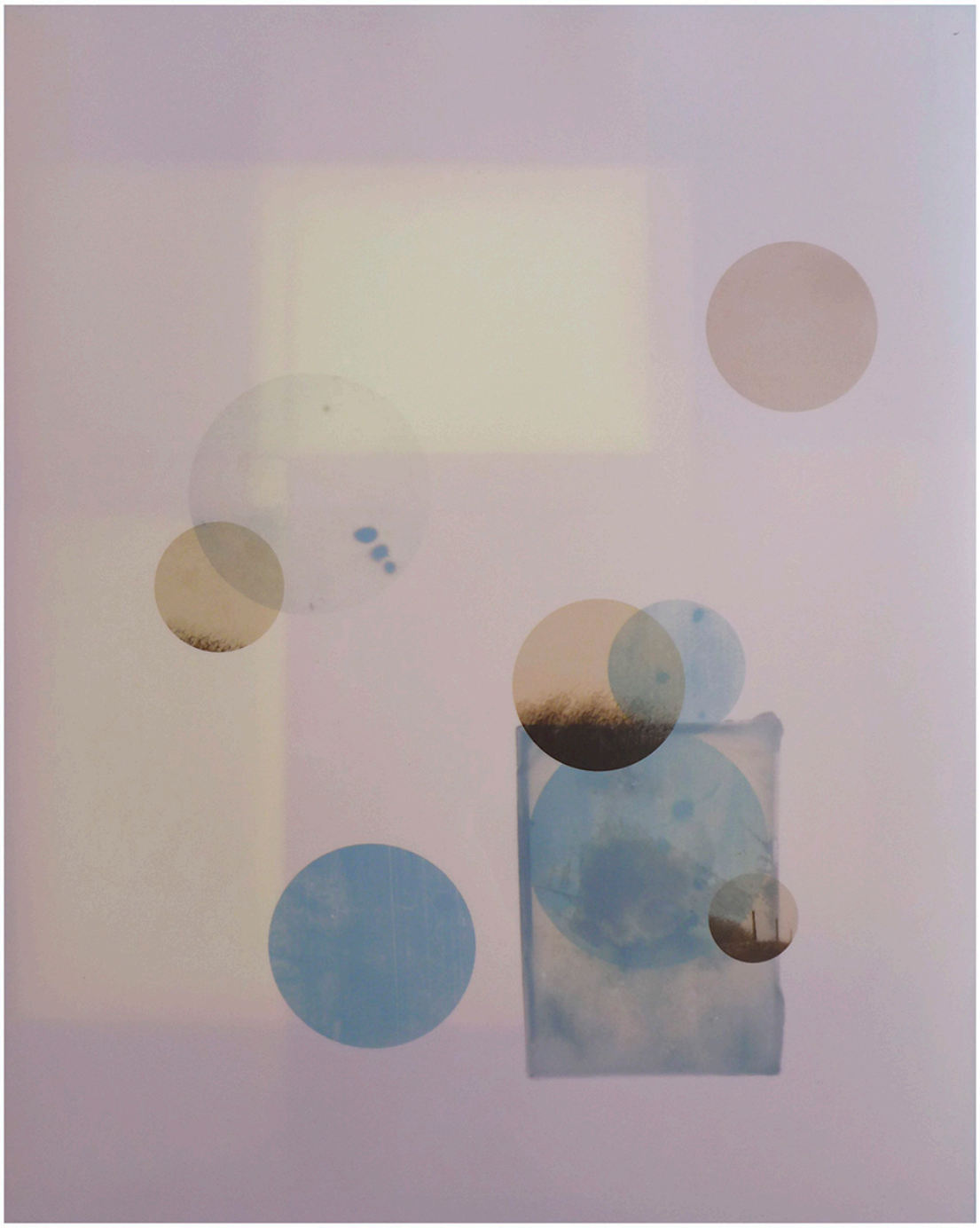

Fig. 82. *Re-encounter #10* (detail) from the series *Re-encounters* (2016-2017)

Two aspects of this work extend what I discovered in chapter three. The first is the added slowness it asks of the viewer. There is more information to take in and process. Most of the compositions of earlier works are simple. But this more demanding work has a counterbalance: the pacifying pastel tones of the background and the opacity of the layered digital positives.

For example, the foreground and background in *Re-encounter #6* offer distinct roles for the viewer [figure 83]. The foreground *content* is intricate and dense, especially in the centre. Yet the transparency material makes the images feel malleable. This helps to keep intact the mental meandering the work has in book form. The background, meanwhile, is calm and loose, a place for the eye to rest. Yet the process and consequences of change, though the changing colours on the unfixed paper, is more overt. This is where awareness of the photographic process and its effect on the piece is felt.

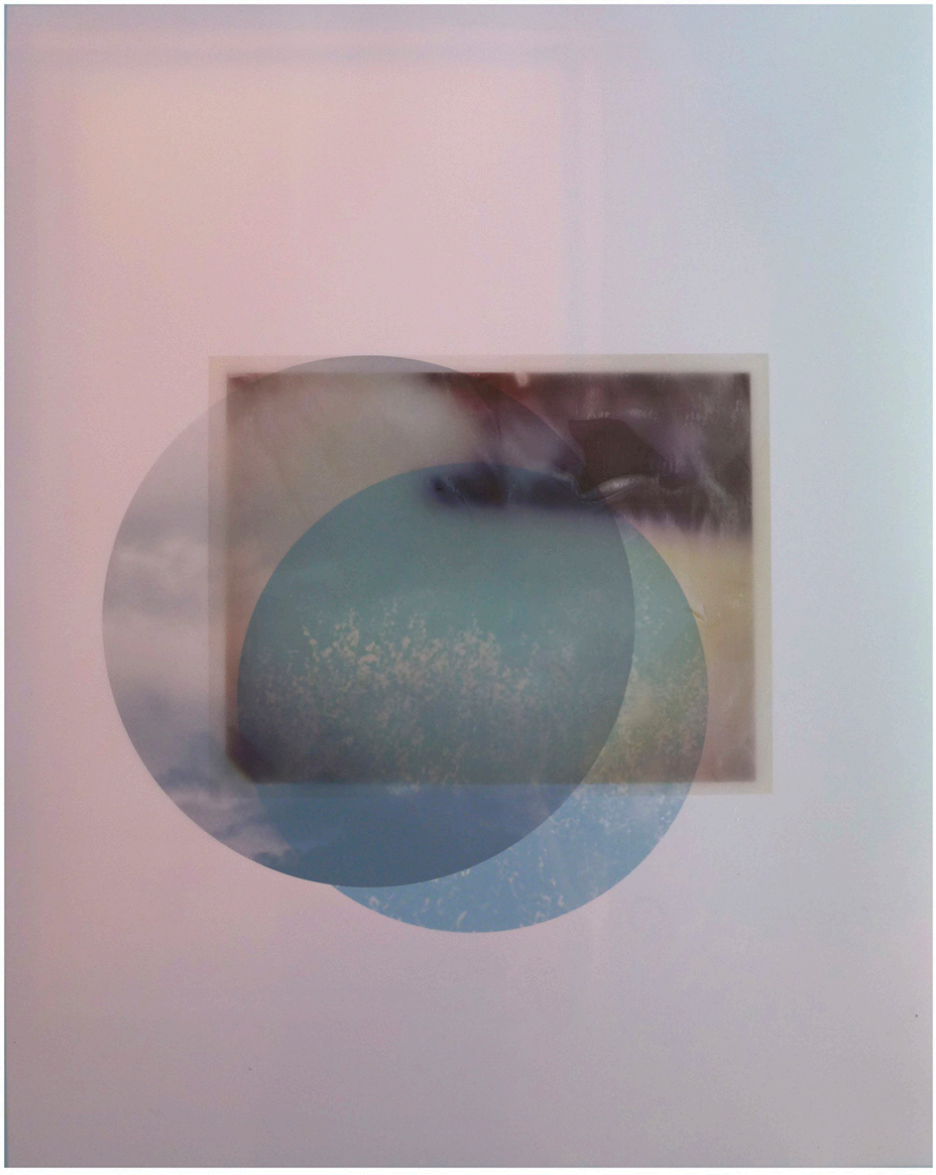

Fig. 83. *Re-encounter #6* (detail) from the series *Re-encounters* (2016-2017)

The second aspect is the autonomy of each piece through the instability of the unfixed paper. Unlike the leaf prints, the process of change here is quicker. This introduces a different layer of duration to viewing. Amplifying this is use of the transparency material. Its semi-reflective clear surface interacts with light in a unique way. In contrast to archival paper and the translucent papers used in the book, transparency film makes the work 'shimmer' on the wall.

Through materials, processes and new content, the work indicates that recalling the past involves many interchangeable levels and gradations of activity. It also indicates that memories are never 'still'. The stories we tell and the perceptions we have distort in both the mind of the teller and the recipient. But the work itself also distorts in its environment. Presenting the work in context of this expanding environment, from snapshot and memory to paper and studio, and beyond, influences the viewer's interaction. This aligns with an argument presented by historian Elizabeth Edwards:

> …photographs cannot be understood through visual content alone but through an embodied engagement with an affective object world, which is both constitutive of and constituted through social relations…their social efficacy is premised specifically on their shifting roles and meanings as they are projected onto different spaces to do different things.[120]

Hanging on the wall, the materials re-encounter the ephemerality of light, which reworks and transforms them. This is, in part, how the series derives its title. A re-encounter is something we come upon, meet, or grapple with over and again. My construction of them as new compositions also is a form of re-encounter.

I found alignment between *Re-encounters* and the work of artist Letha Wilson. During a lecture, Wilson reveals one motivation for using photography is, "how to change a viewer's expectations about how a photograph or photographic material should behave".[121] Wilson further notes an important part of her process is "getting the surface of the image to move or misbehave".[122]

Wilson turns photographs into unique sculptural objects. For example, she photographs American landscapes related to her upbringing. Upon them she carries out a variety of physical interventions. These include folding, cutting, slashing or smothering prints with concrete. The nature of these interventions juxtaposes with the natural subject matter depicted.

[120] Elizabeth Edwards, "Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012): 221.
[121] Letha Wilson, "Letha Wilson," lecture, Gary Metz Lecture Series, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, October 18, 2016.
[122] Ibid.

In other pieces, Wilson photographs in places she lived, layers the prints and then reworks them. Wilson's pair of 're-photograms' is an example [figure 84]. Each image comprises two black-and-white photograms made in New York and Colorado. They are re-presented as archival inkjet prints, through which Wilson makes a slash and a fold in the top layer.

Fig. 84. Letha Wilson, *Re-Photogram Colorado New York (Slash)* and *Re-Photogram Colorado New York (Fold)* (2015)

In taking this approach, Wilson makes collages that are almost representational. The images are not intended to show us what Colorado or New York look like. To some extent they are more about materials than images. But they do question the capacity of photographs to convey a sense of place to the viewer. Wilson's hand-altering the top print of each work encourages the viewer to think more about light, material, and composition. According to Wilson, though the content of these pieces is "unexceptional," she gives them "dimensionality through interventions that speak to what it means to make and to be a maker."[123]

Closer inspection of the photograms reveals their amateur quality. They look more tentative than finished, as if Wilson is searching for photography to 'do more' or 'perform better' at the task it was designed for. That is, capturing a version of the world around us. In this way, the work is reminiscent of Bayard's direct positives. But Wilson takes her work a step further, incorporating physical manipulations. The slash and fold create a third element, becoming like punctuation marks in the moment of viewing.

[123] Ibid.

From Wilson's work, I gained further insight into how photographs bring original experiences back. Mixing the physicality of an artwork with an image is one method of achieving this, evident both in *Re-encounters* and *Re-Photograms*.

There is commonality in our ideas and processes. We revisit our past. We take interest in the 'thing-ness' of photographs, which marries with our perception of what is a photograph is and can become. Our work is about spanning a distance between the actual and the imagined. We abstract things the viewer cannot see, from which the new emerges.

In contrast to Wilson's work, I realised how important the durational experience of *Re-encounters* is. The moment the viewer looks at it in the gallery becomes as important as the work itself. It is work that *becomes work* and *becomes memory* before the viewer's eyes. One does not just look at it. The viewer watches. The viewer absorbs. In doing so, they encounter autonomy and irreplaceability through the work. From this I wondered: does viewing then finish the piece? At what point is the work finished?

This raises an important related point. Usually work has a particular charisma or force upon completion. *Re-encounters* is unsettling in this regard because it never 'ends'. The colours and how they blend together in *Re-encounter #2*, for example changes as I record it for research purposes [figure 85]. At some point, the images will offer far less content. The work will become the aftermath of memory and of process. This blurs the line between memory recollection and making, and between making and displaying. It reminds the viewer that besides context, environment can determine what they recognise, understand, and later remember.

Though this imposes limitations in how I reflect on it, its autonomy also is its success. The work behaves in the way that Bergson understood memory: that it lives, persists, and evolves in time.[124]

[124] Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory," 64.

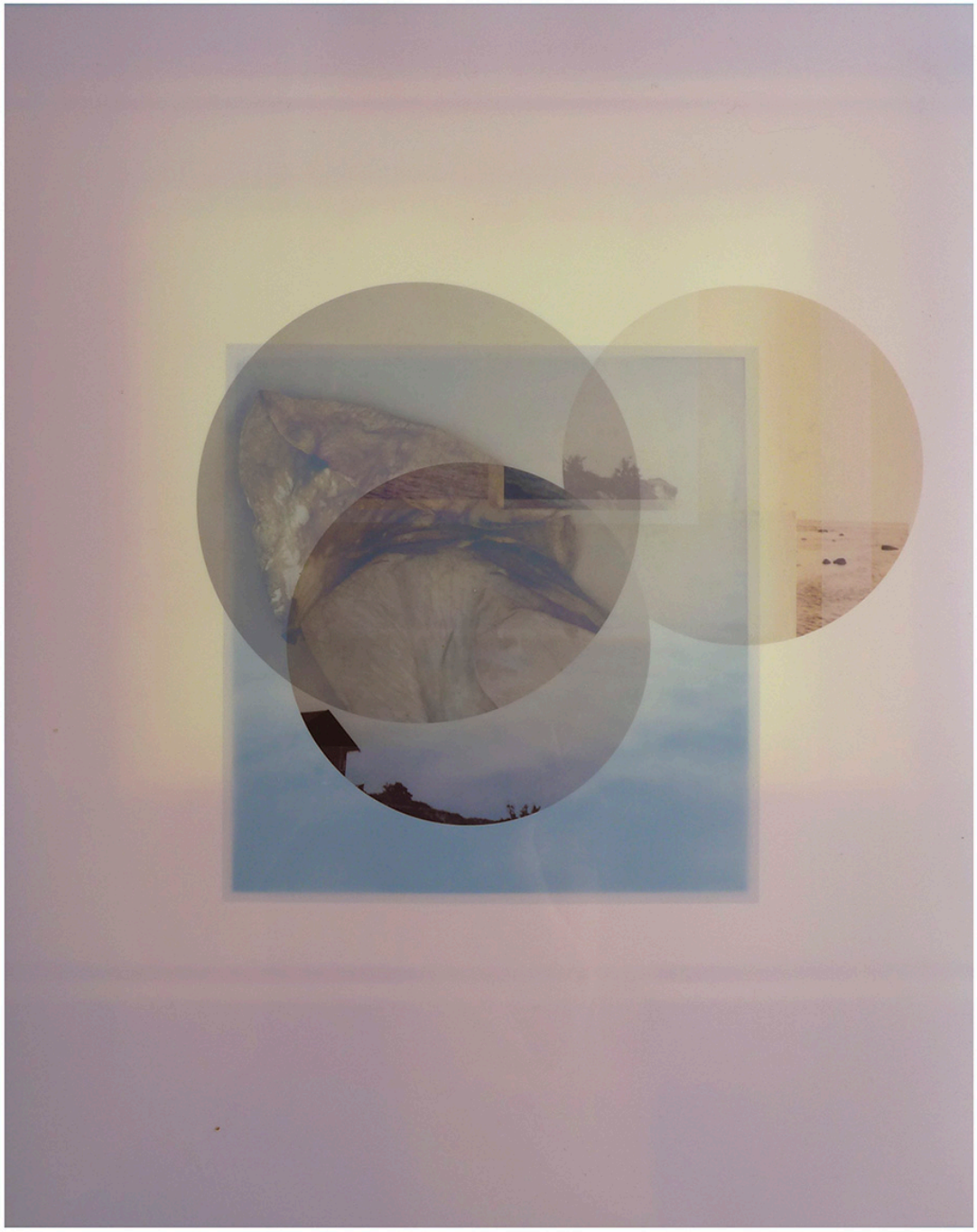

Fig. 85. *Re-encounter #2* (detail) from the series *Re-encounters* (2016-2017)

Each *Re-encounter* also is a response to the complications faced in attempting to separate self from being 'fixed' in my snapshots to being 'semi-fixed' in memory to being 'present' in the studio. The memories churned over for research purposes change quicker and more often than they otherwise would. Taking snippets of my past and self-as-artist, which began as internal private moments in the mind and in the studio, are shaped, transformed, and materialised in each *Re-encounter.* Turning them into 'living' works of art means their autonomy extends into the wider world. This is the process of creating and occupying prepositional space.

Unendings

While collecting roses for the collages in *Here Is Where We Meet*, I took hundreds of photographs in various places related to memories of intimate relationships. This revisitation was a meaningful ritual. I recalled forgotten events. I remembered sounds, scents and feelings experienced 'then', within the frame of 'now'. They seemed more potent and yet more unsteady. I became aware how much I was relying on them for research purposes.

Upon studying the negatives with fresh eyes, they were not the records of place I anticipated. Instead they reflected the sensory cues that 'took me back'. What I photographed was not as important as the feeling I got from 'seeing' with my mind's eye, and then using the camera to try to hold it.

I reflected on this awareness in context of *Re-encounters*. How far could I abstract subject matter to make the photographic space more moving for the viewer? More reminiscent *of* feeling than content that incites feelings. Where the material is the subject *of*, and subject *to* sensory encounter.

This led to rethinking the use of image-symbols as subject matter. In *Here Is Where We Meet* and in *Re-encounters*, the paper's surface is a symbol. In *Slow Companions*, leaves are symbols. Across these works material is as important as subject matter and process. This "shudder of an idea"[125] led to hand-cutting the negatives of the 'revisitation' photographs into triangles. I chose the triangular shape as another way of subverting the rectangle.

It was a bittersweet experience, more so than sanding snapshots for *Excavations*. This is because of what I recalled as I walked and pressed the shutter button, which gave the negatives a special past/present 'charge'. So, then, why cut them?

Chapter two notes how our stories are always in flux, shaped by how we position ourselves within past events. In cutting the negatives, I could address the second part of my research question in a different way than I had in *Excavations*. To separate self from being 'fixed' in a photograph and 'semi-fixed' in memory, the act of ruining irreplaceable work helps to relocate self-as-subject and self-as-maker.

But after cutting the negatives, I had no idea how to proceed. Becoming 'present' in the studio took longer than anticipated because the 'new' felt distant. My inherent attachment to the negatives meant I tried to control the outcome.

[125] Bolt, "The Exegesis and The Shock of the New,": unpaginated.

After several failed attempts, I began placing them onto unexposed silver gelatin paper. I achieved resolution in moving around the triangles like pieces from a tangram puzzle. I realised I was making contemporary replicas of the album pages used for *Slow Companions*. A version of my own past was leading me [figure 86].

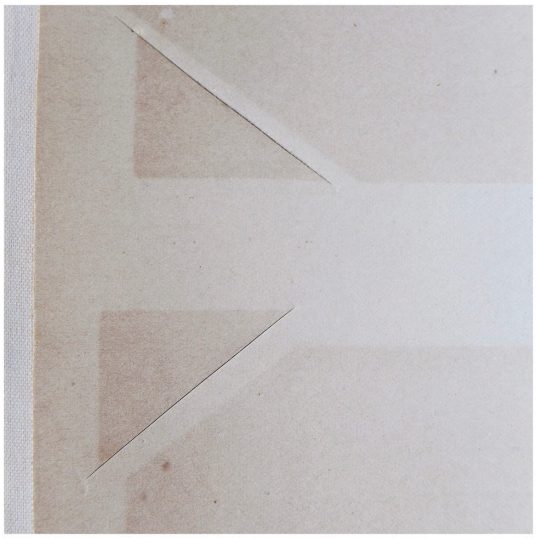

Fig. 86. Photo corners (detail) from the series *Slow Companions* (2015-2017)

I began sticking the negatives into formations that replicate the placing of snapshots into family albums using photo corners, using my own and others' albums as a guide. However, I intentionally 'freed' the triangles from being fixed into the usual square and rectangular shapes for holding snapshots in place. I then inserted each sheet into a contact frame, layered family snapshots on top of the glass, and left them to 'develop' in the studio.

Over time, the paper turned various shades of yellow, pink, blue, mauve, grey, and silver. The colours depended on the quantity of light and how long the snapshots remained in place. Once removed, 'developing' continues owing to the paper being unfixed.

As with *Re-encounters*, the viewer never sees the imprints from the negatives. For example, in *Unending #17* the dark negative triangles stand out against the muted background [figure 87]. Their positioning divides the print into smaller sections. These point to absence, since the triangles do not 'hold' anything tangible.

The edges of the coloured forms seep and blend into one another. This signifies the album as a container we rework and revise. Snapshots are inserted, removed, lost, replaced. Loss also is implicated through the cutting of original negatives, an irreversible gesture that reworks the subject matter they hold.

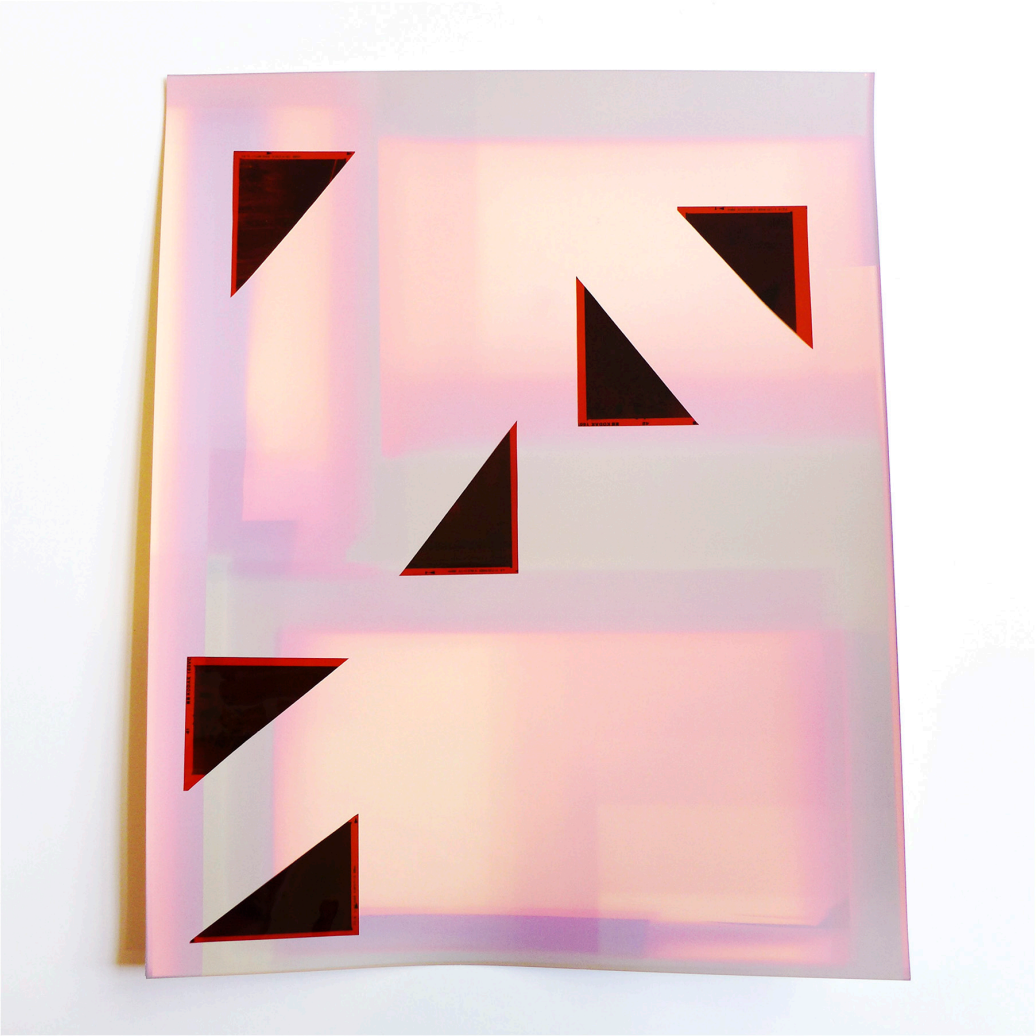

Fig. 87. *Unending #17* from the series *Unendings* (2016-2017)

I came to appreciate that I was folding the *process* of recollection recovery into producing the work. This in turn folds into the experience of viewing it. In contrast to previous work, this 'folding' means the images function as a kind of elegy. The work suggests there are different ways of recollecting through photographs.

The instability of coloured forms heightens this. Their changing in front of the viewer is permanent. This invites the viewer to pay attention to how content and duration interweave. From what they see in the work to the moment they disengage from it; then, the relationship between these two states.

An important finding is that the rectangular shape did not present the same issues identified with *Temporarily Yours*, *Slow Companions,* and *Here Is Where We Meet*. Soft edges, layering, and different tones dilute their stasis. They leak onto the support structure of the photographic paper.

In each work, the traces of the snapshots used to make the coloured forms are more or less visible. *Unending #9* is a good example [figure 88]. Though the indexical content is unavailable, the coloured form marks their existence. But some of the negative corners reveal hints of content. These hints become as important as when the negatives are too opaque. Rather than looking for identification or meaning from content alone, the unrepeatable thing becomes more important. The hand-cutting of the negatives, and the self-ruination of the paper, become poignant experiences for the viewer.

Fig. 88. *Unending #9* from the series *Unendings* (2016-2017)

A similar enticement is present in the unfixed silver gelatin prints of Phil Chang. In his series *Cache, Active*, Chang's work exposes and fades in the light necessary to view it because he presents them in the exhibition site unfixed by chemistry [figure 89]. Within hours, the prints transform into dense monochromes.

Fig. 89. Phil Chang, *Two Sheets of Thick Paper on Top of Two Sheets of Thin Paper* (left) and *Monochrome Exposed* (right) from the series *Cache, Active* (2010-2012)

In *Two Sheets of Thick Paper on Top of Two Sheets of Thin Paper*, physical material, light, and time form the subject, object, and concept of the work. The viewer cannot tell from the image whether the paper is thick or thin, which suggests that making this distinction is unimportant. Rather, the matter itself, how it behaves, and how the viewer detects and discloses meaning from it is key.

Our work differs in two key ways relevant to this research. First, Chang starts with a recognisable representation. For example, a portrait as in *Man, Removing Jacket* [figure 90]. This is a major part of the work's allure, the gradual and deliberate loss of the subject matter. In contrast, *Unendings* starts with representational spaces of the past: snapshots. The viewer is only privy to their shadows as the content.

Fig. 90. Phil Chang, *Man, Removing Jacket* (2011)

A second point of difference is Chang's motivation for the outcome of his work. He reveals:

> …though it's inevitable that one feels something in response to the works' inevitable change, this feeling is irrelevant to the works' meaning – or, for that matter, one's initial impulse to feel altogether.[126]

In *Unendings*, viewer imagination is essential. The sense of loss from the ruined negatives, or from watching the photograph 'pass', does not come at the cost of its meaning because that *is* its meaning. The coloured squares and rectangles, as content and as gaps, invite the viewer to mentally 'fill' them, or to make new meaning from them.

[126] James Welling, "Phil Chang: Cache, Active, Conversation with James Welling," *Aperture*, no. 210. Spring 2013, 147.

I had concerns about some of the works being too abstract, such as *Unending #21* [figure 91]. But conveying self-defining memories with a varying economy of means proved stronger. It demonstrates the characteristics of autobiographical memory. Some are clear, some are pale. Some blend in with other memories. Some appear bright, but fall away toward the edges.

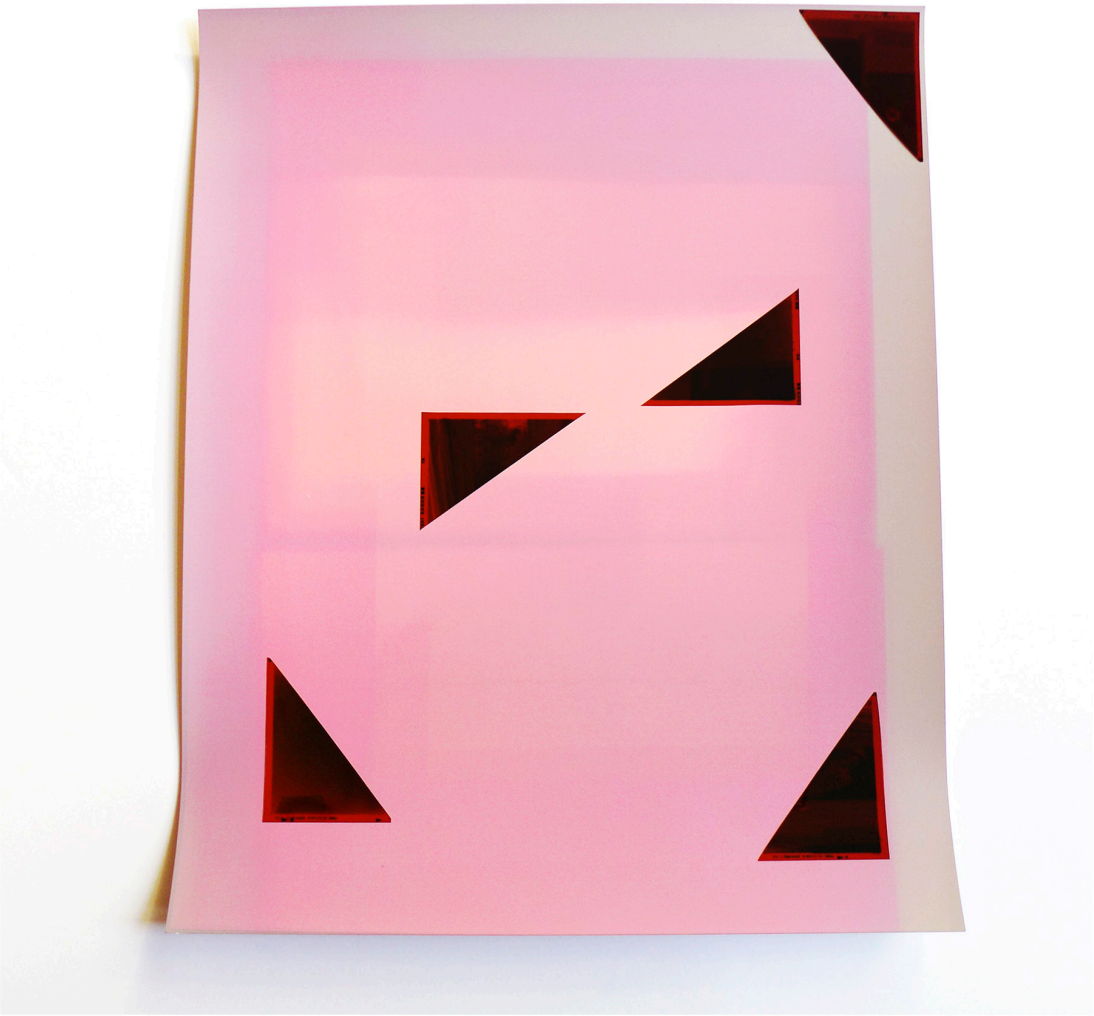

Fig. 91. *Unending #21* from the series *Unendings* (2016-2017)

Each work that comprises *Unendings* self-makes *in the present* while also making present the intangible spaces *of the past*. The glowing squares and rectangles reveal the memory and trace of the photographic forms that inspired their existence. The snapshots are absent; their shadow is the presence. They are now forms of the reworking that informed my studio processes. They contextualize my own experience within a wider understanding of how we encounter self-defining memories and snapshots.

Summary

As permeable works that break one of the medium's most fundamental qualities, the images that comprise *Re-encounters* and *Unendings* redefine their own meaning. Educator Anne West describes the active value such images have on our experience and how they illuminate the imagination:

> The image is a celebration. The image is a clarification. The image is a generative experience. The image is an event of place-making…Think of the image as a photographic afterimage that remains in your mind…[127]

These images go beyond what they are 'of'. Material, process, and content transform the intangible space of memory and the flat death of the snapshot. Reworked as irreplaceable objects, they require slow viewing and a deep level of contemplation.

A key realisation from the work described is that the currents of emotion linking me to my intimate past will, to an extent, remain invisible and unnamed regardless of any work I produce. This is because every time I encounter them my situation is different. This does not mean that self-defining memories lost any of their affective intensity. Rather, using them for research purposes gave them a definition and substance they didn't have when they lived only in my mind. Through practice these memories were bestowed, as much as they helped to create, a new space for going into the future.

In the concluding chapter I will review the key issues arising from my research in terms of what I learned, argued, and established.

[127] Anne West, *Mapping the Intelligence of Artistic Work* (Portland, ME: Moth Press, 2011), 41.

CONCLUSION

I initiated this project from my preoccupation with self-defining memories of intimate relationships. I began with my 'self'. These memories provided a means of confronting my research objective: using photography to manipulate them.

I isolated two questions to address. The first was how to mediate the virtual space between myself, as both the maker and as the subject of my practice, and the viewer. Rather than communicating autobiographical specificity, how to emphasise the malleability of personal memories, using the photographic object as metaphor. The second concerned to what extent separation of self from being 'fixed' in a snapshot and 'semi-fixed' in memory to being 'present' in the studio could occur.

Beginning by re-evaluating earlier work and how my past feeds present thinking and making, I constructed and applied a list of perspectives. These included absence, obfuscation, displacement, subversion, and interaction, for example.

I ascertained that to invite people in to my work, I had to create an imaginative space with room to interpret in diverse ways. Specifically, to show the parallels between memory and photography where my images are props for different kinds of material processes that are intrinsically photographic. I created this space through reworking images, which took the form of material and sensory encounter of personal snapshots. From *Excavations* that involved sanding prints, to transferring images to leaves through an alternative exposure process, and on to producing images that develop and change within the gallery space through the use of unfixed paper. It is through these 'encounters' that I married content and process to highlight in the exhibition space the traits and concerns I have about memory, nostalgia, autobiography, and self-definition. This became key to bridging the intangible space of my past.

In doing so I found what Barbara Bolt observed to be true, that "practice cannot know or preconceive its outcome."[128] Though I had few preconceptions about how my experiments would look, each emerged through process. This started with "shudders" unfolding from the inside out *and* the outside in.[129]

[128] Bolt, "The Exegesis and The Shock of the New," unpaginated.
[129] Ibid.

Reworking snapshots and memories through material and sensory encounter validates their capacity to occupy more than the space of the studio or the space of the mind. Rather, they helped to rework the parameters of these spaces, from which new photographs took form. This is prepositional space, a significant new methodology for artists and viewers to assess their encounter with such photographs. For example, using this methodology could help artists to assess self-expressive imagery from a new viewpoint. It could motivate artists to evaluate in a different way the issues they encounter when making personal work.

My foundation experiments in chapter one focused on the manipulability of snapshots in opposition to photography's indexical nature. I achieved this by layering, cropping and abstracting content, using circular frames, and sanding the surfaces of personal snapshots. Through these approaches, the idea of the snapshot is significantly diminished. Untethered from the obligation to convey the specificity of historical events or narrative, the images instead speak to a shared sense of loss through obscurement and transformation. Through them I addressed the relationship between autobiographical memory, materially-driven studio work, and photography.

In each series, transforming detail into abstraction creates space for new stories to materialise. The prospect of virtual space connecting autobiographical memory with photographs had become a conduit through which I could approach photography in a more reformist manner.

Rather than snapshots that encase the space of the past, as reworked images, I argued that they provide their own space. For example, in *Excavations*, the viewer is led to survey the ruins, to scrutinise and read figurative clues. Through this altered and prolonged type of looking, it becomes clear the snapshot, usually an object of sentiment and value, is now an obscured, unreliable, uncanny semblance of representation and identity

Photography through its indexicality gives power to the snapshot. Snapshots carry autobiographical memory in a way distinct to other visual art forms. Therefore, I had to choose relatable and relevant subject matter. I used image symbols that during 'reading' had more potential to be autobiographical. These included hands, silhouettes, windows, and trees.

Highlighting dualities in my work, such as the absence versus presence of content, also helped to reconcile the distance between self and viewer. This revealed an opportunity to distinguish a new space linking memory and photographs.

In chapter two, approaches to reworking images were contextualised through two theoretical references. I drew on Endel Tulving's theory of chronesthesia (mental time travel) and Henry Bergson's understanding of recollection recovery, and clarified how each provided a critical framework for informing creative practice.

Reviewing and positioning works by Roland Barthes, Guy Archard, and Bill Morrison bore deeper reflection on the ways we share autobiographical stories so that others identify with them. It illuminated how as makers they perceived, concealed, or rearranged personal experiences to create the new. I established that for photographs to be meaningful for a viewer, an 'opening' is necessary. This became key to my research. For when we look at any photograph and mentally time travel or recall a memory, our link to the 'real thing' depicted severs. It is then replaced by its connection with information and images stored mentally.

This introduced new questions and ideas for how I could manipulate the past/present through reworking images. To what extent could I regard photographing as a spatial practice, turning a memory into a physical presence? How to convey that autobiographical memories do not always reappear fluently or sequentially? How to merge the archive versus the ephemeral in my work? Ideas included recurrence, displacement, interaction, and merging physical and mental touching.

A discovery also emerged through material I read and through creative experimentation. To manipulate self-defining memories via photography, two spaces needed to converge: the snapshot, and the artist studio. By using snapshots as creative possibility spaces and through mental time travel, I could gather and protect versions of the recollected past in readiness for how it endures in the form of art. This unique space, at once physical and mental, is what I termed prepositional space.

In chapter three, I discussed how creating and occupying prepositional space allowed me to further unfix self-as-subject to make self-as-artist more present. I accomplished this by applying the approaches identified in chapter two through hybrid and alternative photographic processes. These included chlorophyll printing, encaustic dipping, and collaging.

In *Slow Companions* and in *Here Is Where We Meet*, I extrapolated from memories and snapshots to create reimagined renditions of the past. Through evaluating the unique irreplaceable works of Binh Danh, Alice Cazenave, Hippolyte Bayard, and Smith Eliot I discovered that giving equal attention to image content, materiality and process was more effective than focusing on any one of these elements alone. It informed the creation of new images capable of delivering a different viewing experience.

I also established that adding surfaces to photographs could create viewer 'bond' to the images and thus influence meaning. For example, in *Here Is Where We Meet* it intensifies pictorial and formal relations. In book form, each page, and each image, offers a viewer a unique experience. Different aspects of each image are present or absent. The space of the past/present, as the *content* of these photographs, intersects with the space of the past/present as a *context* for them. The series reveals that memory recollection and snapshots are more than processes or objects that record, duplicate or fix what happens in our lives. Rather, they are dynamic, creative understanding.

In the final chapter, I gave materials some independence and autonomy to be reworked and remade. Memories embedded in *Re-encounters* and *Unending*s are forever manipulated by light and time. The works of Letha Wilson and Phil Chang provided insight into the power of durational experience.

The ambiguity of the works comprising *Re-encounters* and *Unendings* allows a viewer to map onto the work their own experiences while bearing witness to how light and time influence it. Every time a viewer encounters my images, they receive a unique view of them. Through this work, I established that material and process can manipulate and transform the representational qualities of the photograph. Reworked as irreplaceable objects, they require slow viewing and a deep level of contemplation. Making them 'live' on the wall means there is a continuum: a connection to the past and a reflection of the present as it heads into the future.

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